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Ms. Kate Doyle
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2130 H Street, NW
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Dear Ms. Doyle:

This is in response to your April 8, 1992 Freedom of Information Act request. Our April 21, 1992, interim response refers.

The Joint Staff (JS) provided the enclosed documents as responsive to your request. The JS, the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), and the State Department reviewed the documents. Mr. Frank Machak, State Department Director of Freedom of Information, Privacy and Classification Review, and Mr. Edmund F. McBride, Chief, Information Management Division, JS, have determined that portions of the document must be denied pursuant to 5 USC § 552(b)(1). The deleted information is currently and properly classified in accordance with Executive Order 12958 Sections 1.5(c), which concerns intelligence activities, or intelligence sources or methods, and Section 1.5(d), concerning foreign relations or foreign activities of the United States.

You have a right to appeal the decision to withhold this information. Any such appeal should offer justification to support an additional release, and must be received in this Directorate within 60 calendar days of this letter's date.

There are no chargeable costs for processing your FOIA request in this instance.

Sincerely,

A. H. Passarella
Director



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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,
FIRST INSTALLMENT: 9 AUGUST 1960 TO 31 JANUARY 1961
(Revised Version)

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
27 FEBRUARY 1961

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23 April 1961

NOTICE OF REVISION

Due to the accession of additional material
this document has been revised as of this date by the
substitution of pages 94 - 110 for the original pages
94 - 98.



S. W. HORNNER
Colonel, Artillery
Chief

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INTRODUCTION

"Laos is a peaceful country and the Lao people are dedicated to peace; yet Laos for more than twenty years has known neither peace nor security." Thus did the Laotian King Savang Vathana describe the anomaly that is Laos today. A nation with scant natural or human resources, Laos has been the scene of continual skirmishing between East and West. In the struggle for Laos, both power blocs seek the realization of distinct political and military objectives. Moreover, on the ideological plane, victory in Laos would be symbolic of ascendancy in Southeast Asia, in this manner, the contest in Laos becomes a "play-within-the-play" in the world struggle. To the victor in Laos might accrue successes grossly disproportionate to the political domination of this diminutive jungle kingdom. Understandably, therefore, the US Government, in its national policy on Laos, has manifested continuing concern about the Communist threat to Laos, and has been designed to prevent Communist domination of the kingdom.

In 1954, the national policy promulgated the following courses of action concerning Laos:

- 1) Make every possible effort, not openly inconsistent with the U.S. position as to the armistice agreements, to defeat Communist subversion and influence, to maintain and support friendly non-Communist [government] in. . . Laos. . .
- 2) Urge that the French promptly recognize and deal with. . . Laos. . . as [an] independent sovereign [nation].
- 3) Strengthen U.S. representation and deal directly, wherever advantageous to the U.S., with the [government] of . . . Laos, . . .
- 4) Working through the French only insofar as necessary, assist Laos. . . to maintain (1) military forces necessary for internal security and (2) economic conditions conducive to the maintenance and strength of non-Communist areas
- 5) Expose Communist violations of the Armistice in Indochina.
- 6) Conduct covert operations on the maximum feasible₁ and productive scale in support of the foregoing policies

1. (TS) NSC 5429/5, 22 Dec 54, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) sec 90.

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In the next few years, Laos failed to achieve stability - a stability earnestly sought by the US. The US responded to this unsettled condition by accelerating the tempo of its efforts in Laos. On 5 September 1956 the policy approved for Laos provided that the US would:

- 1) Seek to strengthen the determination of the Royal Government to resist subversion and to maintain its independence.
- 2) In order to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-Communism encourage individuals and groups in Laos who oppose dealing with the Communist bloc.
- 3) Develop an attitude of confidence on the part of Lao leaders that the UN Charter, SEATO, and U.S. support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements.
- 4) Encourage and support close bonds between Laos and Thailand, including such political associations, economic cooperation, and joint military planning as feasible.
- 5) Support the expansion and reorganization of police, propaganda, and army intelligence services, provided anti-Communist elements maintain effective control of these services.
- 6) Continue support of the Royal Lao Army to assure internal security and provide limited initial resistance to an attack by the Viet Minh.
- 7) Terminate economic and military aid if the Lao Government ceases to demonstrate a will to resist internal Communist subversion and to carry out a policy of maintaining its independence.

In 1958 US policy remained virtually unchanged. Only minor changes were made, and these modifications were included in the NSC policy on Laos for 1960.

The basic US policy toward Laos prevailing at the time of the August coup provided that the US would:

- 1) Provide military assistance for the development and support of Lao armed forces capable of maintaining internal security against Communist subversion or other elements hostile to U.S. interests and providing limited initial resistance to Communist aggression. Encourage Laos to formulate and implement a broadly conceived security plan, including both internal and external security, which encompasses the services of all branches of the Royal Government, civil and military.

1. (12) NSC 5612/1, dtd 5 Sep 56. CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48)
(2), sec 26, BP Pt 6.

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2) In the provision of U.S. assistance, direct our programs to the promotion of social and economic progress and unification of Laos, thus helping maintain the confidence of the Royal Government in its anti-Communist, pro-Free World 'neutrality.'

3) Continue to promote conditions engendering confidence by Lao leaders that the UN Charter, SEATO, and Free World support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements, and at the same time continue to impress upon the Lao the need for a sense of responsibility and recognition that too drastic actions may have adverse international implications.

4) Encourage the Lao to observe constitutional and legal processes as providing the soundest basis for the growth and vitality of democratic institutions; discourage resort to force in political affairs.

5) Encourage the Lao Government to give emphasis to programs tending to reorient disaffected elements of the population.

6) Encourage and support cooperation between Laos and other Southeast Asian countries, particularly Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Malaya, and Burma, including such joint effort in the anti-subversion, economic, communications, and military fields as is feasible.

7) Develop greater mutual understanding and cooperation with the French in the furtherance of common Free World objectives.

8) Strongly support 'the UN presence' and expanded UN technical assistance in Laos, and make a special intensified effort to encourage other friendly nations to assume a larger share of responsibility for the support of the country.¹

Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) 1954-1960

The Geneva Accords did little to allay US fears that the Laotian Army, in the post-Geneva years, would provide neither an effective agency for internal security nor an adequate deterrent to Viet Minh aggression. Following the Geneva Conference, the French continued to furnish military advice to Laos, although the French Military Mission (FMM), reduced in strength, ceased assigning personnel to train the combat arms of the FAL. It soon became apparent that additional assistance was necessary if the Laotian Army was to develop into a capable fighting force. The US initiated such military aid through the US Operations Mission (USOM). The USOM, organized in January, 1955, as a mechanism of the US Country Team to administer the US dollar-aid program, was

1. (TS) NSC 6012, 9150/9105 (11 July 60), 25 Jul 60.

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now charged with the additional assignment of providing financial support for the Laotian military establishment.

It soon became apparent that the magnitude of the program required a separate organization. Late in 1955, therefore, the Programs Evaluation Office (PEO), an agency of the Department of Defense, was established, ostensibly as a section of the USOM but actually operating as a separate element of the US Country Team. The personnel of the PEO were all civilians, but, since their duties involved knowledge of military matters and equipment, the majority of them were reserve or retired military personnel. The PEO was occupied chiefly with the preparation of budgetary requests and the procurement of supplies. It paid the salaries of Laotian military personnel and furnished most of the military support to the armed forces of Laos, and carried out other activities designed to improve the economic and political situation in Laos. Perhaps the principal problem of the PEO was the difficulty experienced in its attempts to insure that US equipment was being put to proper use.

In December 1958, it was determined that the PEO should play a still more active role. Plans were made for augmenting the organization with military personnel in a covert role. CINCPAC recommended that an active duty general officer be assigned as Chief, PEO. Brig Gen John A. Heintges was assigned this task. Prior to assuming his new duty, Heintges was ordered by CINCPAC to survey the Laotian situation and propose a major reorganization of US military activities in Laos.

The conclusions of Gen. Heintges' survey provided a basis for a far reaching plan to: 1) reorganize the PEO by increasing its military personnel; 2) aid in training the FAL; and 3) improve the logistics of the armed forces in Laos.

To aid in training of the FAL, the plan envisioned: 1) providing personnel to form joint US/French teams to train each of the twelve regular ANL battalions; 2) assigning a field grade

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officer to each region headquarters to supervise the training teams; 3) activating a training center at Seno Air Base to train recruits and MOS specialists; 4) supplementing and complementing French training of the technical services; 5) providing US military training and advisory teams for specialized assistance in internal security training (special forces and PSYWAR); 6) increasing the Laotian quota at the U.S. Army Infantry School, to allow for 60 additional FAL representatives to take three months courses.

Since, however, operational training of the FAL was a responsibility of the French, these recommendations could be implemented only after coordination with the French government. On 29 May 59 the French concurred in the "Heintges Plan," as it was now called. The agreement stated that the special training team efforts would be in effect for from six months to a year, but it allowed for a review of this provision. (On 31 December 1959 CINCPAC recommended that the program be extended for another year.)

The "Heintges Plan" was forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, by CINCPAC on 13 December 1958, and at his suggestion, many of the proposals were adopted. In February, 1959, the now "Mister" Heintges assumed command of the PEO. His staff was reorganized and increased by nine US Army officers and eight NCO's traveling in civilian status. His recommendations for the improvement of logistical support of the FAL were taken under consideration by the Department of Defense, many were favorably acted upon in 1959. More important, all the proposals to improve the training of the FAL were adopted during 1959.

The new organization was just beginning to function in its expanded mission, including a more active logistic, advisory, and technical training role, when armed insurgency broke out in July 1959. The gravity of this situation and the consequent increase in the PEO workload resulted in a request for additional personnel. CINCPAC approved the request and warned the JCS that existing French and US efforts in training and logistics were not

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satisfactory in developing the FAL. Additional US advice and assistance were vital, CINCPAC stated, if deficiencies were to be corrected and the competence of the FAL increased to the standard required to meet the Communist challenge. He noted that while PEO had to be adequately staffed, the only long range solution would be the formal establishment of a MAAG.

On 17 February 1960 General Phoumi, the Laotian Minister of Defense, in a letter to the Chief PEO, requested a one year extension of US training effort in Laos.

The International Supervisory Control Commission for LAOS (ICC)

The Geneva Agreement ended the rebellion against the French in the territories that had been French Indochina, but could not end the contentions amongst the indigenes. It was necessary, therefore, to establish a continuing body to secure compliance with the terms of the agreements.

The International Supervisory Control Commission for Laos (soon dubbed ICC), comprised of India, Poland and Canada, was the instrument created for the supervision and implementation of the Geneva Agreements in that country. Under the terms of these agreements all Vietminh troops and all but a small, specified number of French troops were to be withdrawn from the country; moreover, Laos was barred from entering military alliances or accepting the establishment of foreign bases on its territory. The agreements also stipulated that the Pathet Lao forces were to withdraw to the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly, which they were to administer in collaboration with the Royal Laotian Government. The agreements further stipulated, however, that before elections could be held in these provinces, the two factions must reach an accord on the political and military administration of the area.

By 19 November 1954 the ICC could report that all terms of the armistice agreements had been met with one exception: the question of the military and political administration of Sam Neua

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and Phong Saly remained unresolved. During the next year the Royal Government wavered between a policy of firmness advocated by the US and the policy of extreme caution advocated by France, the UK, and the ICC. After a long period of serious fighting and fruitless negotiations, the Government informed the ICC on 9 November 1955 that no agreement could be reached with the Pathet Lao, and that, therefore, the elections in Phong Saly and Sam Neua would have to be conducted without agreement. Because the authority of the Laotian Government had not been re-established in the two provinces, however, the National Assembly postponed the elections until December 1956.

By early 1956 the growing seriousness of the Pathet Lao rebellion, together with the mounting activity of the US in Laos, indicated that in future months Laos would occupy a crucial place in the politics of the cold war. The ICC for Laos tried to exert pressure on the Royal Government to avoid hostilities. But its influence on the Royal Government was seriously impaired by the attitude of the Commission members toward the Pathet Lao. The Polish member sided with the Pathet Lao in every dispute, and the Indian, reflecting Nehru's charitable approach to Asian neutralism, gave the Pathet Lao the benefit of every doubt. The Canadian, intent upon avoiding charges of favoritism, generally acceded to the Indian chairman. Often ignoring the most flagrant violations of the armistice by the Pathet Lao, the ICC tended to restrain the Royal Government on those rare occasions when it was considering more forceful action in the northern provinces.

An agreement between the PL and the RLG was finally reached on 19 November 1957. The authority of the Lao Government over the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly was recognized, and the integration of 1,500 Pathet Lao troops into the Laotian Army was arranged. The Government had been agitating for the removal of the ICC for some time; in May 1958, it announced that all its obligations under the Geneva Agreements had been fulfilled and

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that it would henceforth recognize the UN as the sole arbitratative body. The ICC advised the RLG that following the elections in May of 1958 its task in supervising the Geneva Agreements on Laos would be fulfilled. The ICC, however, adjourned on 19 July 1958, without legally dissolving. Thus, although its members left the country, it was not disestablished but merely suspended.

In the next two years several efforts were made to reconvene the commission. Following the North Vietnam-Laotian border violence in January 1959, the Laotian Government formally protested against an alleged occupation of part of its territory by North Vietnamese troops and requested that a UN observation mission be sent to the disputed area. In turn, in a letter of 25 January to the Indian Chairman of the ICC for Laos, North Vietnam protested against an alleged Laotian violation of the frontier. The letter also accused the RLG of an infringement of the Geneva Agreements by "repressive measures" against the Neo Lao Hak Xat and by large-scale importation of US arms. It requested a reconvention of the adjourned ICC.

In a note to the UK in March 1959 the USSR suggested that as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference they should request the ICC to resume its work of supervision and control as soon as possible. This request was seconded by Communist China who charged that, in threatening to resort to military means against the Pathet Lao, the RLG had committed a "serious violation" of the Geneva Agreements "tantamount to launching a civil war in Laos." The North Vietnamese Government similarly condemned the Laotian Government's action and demanded that the ICC return to Laos immediately. On 9 June 1959 the UK rejected the Soviet proposal. The RLG, said the UK, had consistently acted in accordance with the Geneva Agreements; the integration of the Pathet Lao troops in no way infringed the agreements.

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On 10 June 1960, precursory to his later actions (see item 14 Nov 60), Prime Minister Nehru called for the reconvening of the ICC. Describing the situation in Laos, Nehru said that some of the Indo-Chinese states had been subjected to "outside pulls" which had become "stronger on various sides" and had given rise to problems. The existence of the ICC, he charged would be "a sobering and balancing factor" in this situation. "Unfortunately for us, . . . we have accepted a certain responsibility in the Indo-Chinese States as chairman of the Commission," he continued, "and it is a difficult and embarrassing task; . . . the Government of India did not propose that the Commission should go against the will of the Laotian Government, but that advice should be given to that Government to agree to reconvene the Commission."¹

No results followed from the initiative of the Indian Prime Minister, but in midsummer the situation came dramatically to a head. The Kong Le coup, which opens the following chronological summary of the last six months of Laotian history can only be considered in the context of past developments in the ICC, the PEO, and Basic US National Policy. As the following should convincingly prove, a strong causal nexus exists between recent Laotian history and the struggle of the power Blocs; a struggle in which the three skeins traced above play no little part.

1. (U) Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1959-1960, 10 June 1959.

9 Aug

Captain Kong Le and his 2d Laotian Paratroop Battalion, supported by armored units, seized complete control of Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos. Pro-Western Premier Tiao Somsanith and other government and military leaders were in the royal capital, Luang Prabang at the time.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 229, 11 Aug 60; NYT, 10 Aug 60, 1.

9 Aug

The Secretary of State, Christian Herter, advised the US Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop G. Brown, that the policy of the US Government was "to assist in any feasible way" any "determined effort which [the] legitimate government under [the] King's direction might make to restore its authority." Therefore, the Secretary "would not wish in any way [to] complicate or have our friends complicate" any such attempt. The prospect of a "neutralist government . . . dedicated to another fruitless round of negotiations with Pathet Lao" appeared to Secretary Herter as one fraught with danger to the independence of Laos.

(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 141, 9 Aug 60.

10 Aug

Kong Le's group, under the title of "High Command of the Revolution," established an Executive Committee headed by Kong Le to administer civil and military powers until a new government could be invested. In a radio broadcast, the paratroop captain stated his "most important goal" to be a "true neutral policy," and called for an end to Lao fighting Lao. He also advocated accepting assistance from all countries "for constructive projects." During 10 years of freedom, according to Kong Le, the Lao people had suffered injustices, misery, and maltreatment from a corrupt minority of political leaders who used foreign aid to enrich themselves. Foreign aid had also been used by the donors to exploit and enslave the Lao.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 268, 12 Aug 60 and 256, 11 Aug 60; NYT, 11 Aug 60, 3.

10 Aug

At a meeting in Bangkok General Phoumi Nosavan, Minister of Defense in the Somsanith Government and a staunch anti-Communist, revealed to an American Embassy officer his plans for military action to suppress the rebellion. Phoumi stated he planned an attack by paratroops to retake the Vientiane airport, followed by the employment of additional air-transported forces to "oust the revolutionary group." Phoumi's headquarters was to be in the town of Savannakhet.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 221, 10 Aug 60.

10 Aug

The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to deliver the following message to Premier Somsanith:

My government . . . continues to support fully [the] legally constituted government of Laos. It considers rebellion an internal affair of Laos and is sure that, under his Majesty's leadership your government can restore peace to [the] Kingdom through quick and decisive action.

(The message was received by the Premier on 12 August, reportedly, with "great happiness.")

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 264, 12 Aug 60;

(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 150, 10 Aug 60.

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12 Aug

The following actions were approved by the State and Defense Departments to implement the US policy of support of the Royal Laotian Government:

1. Designation of two senior Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) liaison officers to Forces Armee Lao (FAL) commanders at Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. These officers were to process requests for logistical support, furnish intelligence, and carry on PEO functions as practicable.

2. Use of Military Assistance Program Materials in Thailand for support of Royal Laotian Government military operations.

3. Reinforce CAT aircraft (contract aircraft) at Bangkok. One or two aircraft would be immediately available to transport members of the Royal Laotian Government.

The JCS authorized CINCPAC to employ actions 1 and 2 as he deemed "responsive to the current situation."

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 161, 12 Aug 60;
(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 981358, 12 Aug 60, JCS Secretariat.

12 Aug

In a statement broadcast over a Hanoi station, the Central Committee of the Neo Lao Hak Xat Party (NLHX), the political head of the pro-Communist Pathet Lao, declared that its followers in Laos had avowed their full support of the coup staged in Vientiane by Kong Le.

The Party proposed that the forces of Kong Le's "revolutionary committee" and the Pathet Lao combine action to oppose all US "imperialist schemes." Further, the party suggested the formation of a coalition government composed of representatives of various nationalities and of "patriotic and progressive political parties."

NYT, 13 Aug 60, 4.

13 Aug

In a Laotian National Assembly meeting, the majority of the members passed a vote of "no-confidence" in the Somsanith Government. (On the next day members of the National Assembly flew from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to report the vote to King Savang Vathana.)

NYT, 15 Aug 60, 1.

14 Aug

In an appraisal of the Laotian situation for the JCS, CINCPAC made the following points:

1. By presenting himself as preferable to an outright Communist takeover or bloody civil war, the avowed neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma stood a good chance of capturing the Kong Le movement and using it as a means to seize power.

a. In view of Souvanna's record of favoring close relations with the Communist powers, his collaboration with the NLHX, and his opposition to the US training effort, he did not present a happy solution from the US point of view.

3. If Souvanna or someone "even worse" came to power, the US would "be confronted with a situation requiring reassessment of our current military policies."

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 140045Z, 14 Aug 60, JCS Secretariat.

15 Aug Ambassador Brown, in a message to the Secretary of State, attributed the fall of the Somsanith Government to the following causes: 1) the constant fighting of Lao against Lao; 2) "irregularity of pay"; 3) alleged corruption in the handling of US aid; 4) improperly conducted elections; and 5) unnecessary provocation of the Pathet Lao through too close an alliance between the Somsanith regime and the West, lack of contact with Hanoi and Peiping, and exclusion of the NLHX representatives from the Assembly.

With regard to Phoumi Nosavan, the Ambassador felt that "despite genuine efforts by Phoumi to clean up corruption and improve army administration, and his definite program of civilian type assistance by the FAL to [the] population, Phoumi has become to many the symbol of purely military power, thought to be often abused, and thus far unsuccessful in achieving the Lao's main desire, namely, peace at home and with his neighbors! An effort by Phoumi to take control by force would certainly be opposed by Great Britain, France, and the U.N.; Cambodia would be antagonized, and the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists might intervene.

Therefore, concluded the Ambassador, "despite Phoumi's undoubted abilities and strong pro-Western attitude, it should be made unmistakably clear to him that [the] U.S. opposes any effort on his part at military effort [to] regain control of or split [the] country."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 288, 15 Aug 60.

15 Aug Premier Somsanith submitted his resignation, and the King asked Souvanna Phouma to form a new Government

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 290, 15 Aug 60.

17 Aug Souvanna's Cabinet was approved by the National Assembly. He himself took the portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Defense in addition to the Premiership.

Souvanna told the Assembly that his aim was to restore internal peace in Laos and to pursue a "really neutral" foreign policy while respecting all treaties Laos had signed with foreign countries. He stated that his country would accept aid from all countries if it were given "without strings." Laos, he added, would foster all existing good relations and would seek new friendships with other countries if they were not "enemies of Laos."

NYT, 17 Aug 60, 14; 18 Aug 60, 1.

17 Aug In a message to Ambassador Brown, Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon expressed dissatisfaction with the Souvanna Government, pointing out that it contained a known leftist, was weak and inexperienced, and was at the mercy of Kong Le. Apart from the international complications, the principal reason for withholding support of an attack against Vientiane had been the

overwhelming desire of the Lao to avoid bloodshed, and doubts as to whether army commanders outside Vientiane would follow Phoumi in an attack on the city (see item 10 August). If Phoumi attacked and failed, he might be eliminated as a force in Laos and the Army might be seriously divided.

In Dillon's opinion, all-out support of Phoumi was unacceptable to the US. Aside from Viet-Nam and Thailand, US allies would probably not support such a policy. And return of Phoumi to power with US support in a bloody coup would probably lead to the build-up of opposition forces and his eventual overthrow. At the same time US prestige would probably suffer seriously.

Mr. Dillon felt, therefore, that Phoumi and the FAL should be held together as a counterpoise to the situation in Vientiane. For this purpose, [redacted] had been authorized to give Phoumi limited financial support to meet FAL's urgent need for supply. For the present, the US would continue to work with the Souvanna Government, preserving US assets in the country against the day when action might have to be taken to prevent unacceptable developments.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 188, 17 Aug 60.

18 Aug Leaflets dropped on Vientiane declared the formation of the "Committee Against the Revolutionary Group," composed of military officers and with General Phoumi Nosavan as its chairman. Accusing Kong Le of forcing the resignation of the Somsanith Government and inviting domination of Laos by the Chinese Communists, the Committee claimed its purpose was to restore order in Vientiane so that the government could function normally.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-33, 22 Aug 60.

18 Aug Ambassador Brown recommended to the Secretary of State that, in view of the danger of a clash between the Souvanna Government and the Phoumi-led FAL, the King be persuaded to bring pressure on both factions to compromise. Dillon, as Acting Secretary, approved and proposed that the Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane attempt to persuade the King. (See item 19 August.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 315, 17 Aug 60;

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 203, 17 Aug 60.

18 Aug The French Government's position on Laos, given by an embassy officer to the Department of State, contained the following points: 1) Souvanna was trying to give "reasonable direction" to Kong Le's Revolutionary Committee, his investiture as Premier had been carried out in a manner assuring "maintenance of legality and the Constitution," and he therefore should be "discreetly encouraged" so long as his policies did not endanger Lao or Western interests; 2) Phoumi's movement in the south posed a grave danger of hardening the Laotian Government's position to the detriment of the West and of inviting intervention by the Thais and South Vietnamese; 3) the French commander at Seno had been instructed to support only representatives of the legal government; and, 4) support of Phoumi would endanger Souvanna's achievement of what the French sought for Laos--a neutral government oriented toward the West.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 725, 19 Aug 60.

19 Aug After agreeing on 17 August to a request by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) for their assistance in drafting a memorandum to be sent from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of State urging support of General Phoumi, the JCS forwarded a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense along the desired lines. "Since," stated the JCS, "the situation may take a turn for the worse within the next few days, we recommend that General Phoumi be informed immediately that the U.S. will render him necessary support in his efforts to regain control of the Laos Government." The JCS also recommended that the necessary assistance, particularly aircraft, be provided to General Phoumi as soon as practicable. (See item 23 August.)

(TS) JCSM-373-60, 19 Aug; (S) Note, Secy JCS to Control Div, "Situation in Laos," 17 Aug 60. Both in JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

19 Aug The Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane, having agreed to seek the King's views on the current Laotian crisis, went to Luang Prabang (see item 18 August). Denied access to the King, he was received by the Secretary General of the Royal Palace who stated that His Majesty was not aware of negotiations between Phoumi and Souvanna and had to be "kept outside the conflict." Questioned about the King's refusal to sign the Royal Ordinance appointing members of the new Government, the Secretary General claimed that the Assembly had acted under military pressure and implied that no proper decision could be reached until the military dispute was settled. (An envoy dispatched by the new Government to report the confirmation of the Souvanna cabinet to the King was arrested upon his arrival in Luang Prabang.) (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-31, 22 Aug 60; NYT, 20 Aug 60, 8.

19 Aug The JCS provided CINCPAC with a copy of recently approved, consolidated and revised Terms of Reference for the PEO, Laos. (Up to this time the PEO had been operating under terms of reference set forth in a series of letters and messages during 1955; the new terms resulted from action initiated by CINCPAC in November 1959.) (S) SM-797-60, derived from JCS 1992/826, 27 Jul 60, JMF 9155.2/5191 (23 May 60).

20 Aug General Ouane Rathikone, who had resigned when the Souvanna Government was formed, accepted reappointment as Commander in Chief of the FAL, with Kong Le as his deputy commander. NYT, 21 Aug 60, 19.

20 Aug The British Foreign Office view of Laotian affairs was expressed to an American Embassy officer by the Head of the Southeast Asia Department as follows: 1) Kong Le was typical of Asian Nationalist leaders, and "after he has climbed down somewhat," an effort should be made to live with him; 2) Souvanna was more of a free agent than the US recognized and should be strengthened; and 3) reassertion of a position of power by Phoumi would endanger the long-term stability of the country and would invite another coup. (S) Msg, London to SecState, 887, 20 Aug 60.

21 Aug

CINCPAC commented to the JCS that a compromise between Souvanna and Phoumi seemed predicated on passive acceptance of adjustment to the left in Laos. US interests would best be served by refusal to recognize the Souvanna Government on the ground that it was not legally invested; the US should encourage negotiations but assist Phoumi with "money and discreet transportation through Thailand so that he could increase pressure on Vientiane and be ready to move quickly if disorder broke out there." The US should also encourage the King and other anti-Communist elements to hold out and make clear to the "French-British-Zellweger" types that pressure to secure royal approval of the Souvanna Government would not work.

The JCS concurred in CINCPAC's view that Phoumi should be supported. (See item 23 August 60.)

(S) Msg. CINCPAC to JCS, 202317Z, 21 Aug 60; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC 981873, 24 Aug 60 (JCS Secretariat).

22 Aug

A US Embassy Officer in Thailand reported to the Department of State that initially Thailand had reacted to the Kong Le coup with indecision. However, after meeting with Phoumi, Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand conferred with his generals on 15 August and decided to assist Phoumi in efforts to oust rebel forces from Vientiane. Up to this time such assistance had been covert.

In the opinion of the Ambassador, the resolution of the Laotian crisis would be deeply significant for future US-Thai relations, because the Thai would blame the US for failure to act decisively in support of the pro-Western Somsanith Government if it were successfully replaced by a neutralist regime including Communists or pro-Communists.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, Unnumbered, 22 Aug 60.

23 Aug

Souvanna Phouma, after repeated futile efforts to negotiate with General Phoumi and his group, flew in a US plane to confer with the General at Savannakhet. He was accompanied by General Ouane, a representative of Kong Le, a member of the UN staff, and a US military attache. Upon his return to Vientiane, Souvanna reported agreement had been reached. There would be no fighting, no more radio propaganda or leaflets, and, in a few days, "all would go [to] Luang Prabang before [the] King and political problems would be solved by constitutional means."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 374, 23 Aug 60; NYT, 21 Aug 60, 1; 22 Aug 60, 4; 24 Aug 60, 5.

23 Aug

The Ambassador in Laos reported that arming of villagers around Vientiane, including those in areas friendly to the Pathet Lao, had been going on for some time, and had reached the point where this militia was a substantial military factor. Reportedly, Pathet Lao regulars and sympathizers had also been integrated into the defense of Vientiane.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 371, 23 Aug 60.

23 Aug

At a State-Defense meeting on Laotian policy, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff took the position that the US should give to Phoumi, as "our only hope in Laos," an expression "of our strong support to the point of fulfilling any reasonable

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military request by him." Failure to do so would allow Phoumi to "slip and Laos will end up with a neutral, if not pro-Communist government" (see item 21 August).

The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, who, with the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, represented the Department of State, agreed that "Phoumi despite his lack [of] popularity was our best bet as [a] staunch anti-Communist." He should, therefore, be given explicit "assurances of our complete support of him and willingness to honor quickly any reasonable request from him."

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 226, 23 Aug 60.

26 Aug

The Lord Privy Seal stated the British position on Laos to an officer of the US Embassy as follows: 1) a firm government should be established quickly because the Pathet Lao was becoming increasingly active; 2) Phoumi and Souvanna should be encouraged to work together to provide such a government, which could then deal with Kong Le from a position of strength; and 3) the US, while holding the PAL together, should avoid encouraging Phoumi to use force against the Souvanna Government.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1002, 26 Aug 60.

28 Aug

In response to a directive from Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chief, PEO Laos, submitted a plan for military action to revitalize the Laotian Army so that it could bring the Pathet Lao under control, and thereby create a favorable climate for civil administration and cold war operations. Essential to the success of the plan was adequate and timely fiscal and logistical support. The plan, which would take about 26 months to carry out, called first for reorganizing and adequately equipping the Laotian Army, then conducting field operations to defeat the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, CH, PEO LAOS to CINCPAC, 28R50Z, 28 Aug 60; (S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF981980, 25 Aug 60 JCS Secretariat.

29 Aug

The National Assembly of Laos convened in Luang Prabang. Thirty-four assembly members came with Prince Souvanna from Vientiane and twenty-two arrived with General Phoumi Nosavan from Savannakhet. The first action of the Assembly was to accept the resignation of the Tiao Somsanth Government. After King Savang Vathana had officially approved its resignation, he asked Prince Souvanna to form a new Government.

NYT, 30 Aug 60, 6.

30 Aug

The US Ambassador to Thailand, Alexis Johnson, discussed the Laotian crisis with Thai Premier Sarit who was "bitter" over the failure of the US to give stronger support to General Phoumi. As a result of the course of events culminating in the return of Souvanna to power, Sarit was of the opinion that the Pathet Lao were in control of Vientiane, thus placing Communists on the borders of Thailand. This was a matter of profound concern for the Thai Government.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 396, 30 Aug 60.

31 Aug

The National Assembly met at Luang Prabang and approved unanimously the new compromise Government of Souvanna Phouma. The new cabinet included five members of the Somsanith Government, including General Phoumi as Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior. The King accepted the new Government and its leaders departed, Phoumi to Savannakhet to liquidate his revolutionary committee, and Souvanna to Vientiane to explain the composition of the new Government to Kong Le. The paratroop captain, who at first stated his opposition to the inclusion of General Phoumi in the cabinet, announced his acceptance of it the following day.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 446, 31 Aug 60;
NYT, 31 Aug 60, 4.

1 Sep

The US Ambassador in Paris provided the Secretary of State with the comments of the Chief, Indo-China Affairs, of the French Foreign Office on the situation in Laos. The French official indicated that his government was not happy with Phoumi's presence in the Laotian Government and was especially unhappy about his appointment as Vice Prime Minister. Souvanna would find his hands tied by Phoumi and be unable, therefore, to solve the major problems confronting the government. Moreover, Phoumi's elevation to the Cabinet risked the renewal of the same type of Communist harassment experienced by previous anti-Communist governments. The French official also stated that Kong Le's continued attempts to dictate to a legitimate Government of Laos could not be tolerated, but he was mildly optimistic that Souvanna could handle Kong Le.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 291, 1 Sep 60.

2 Sep

The Department of State expressed concern to Ambassador Brown over the failure of Phoumi to return to Vientiane and take up his duties in the Government-occasioned apparently by fear for his personal safety. The Ambassador was requested, therefore, to inform the Department concerning 1) Souvanna's attitude toward Phoumi's return, and 2) the power and influence wielded by Kong Le. (See item 3 September 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 270, 2 Sep 60.

2 Sep

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs appraised the Laotian situation at the time of the investiture in office of the Souvanna Government as follows:

1. While Kong Le had apparently accepted the new Government, his position was not yet clear, and until this question was resolved the scope for constructive action seemed limited at best.

2. While the US could not forget Souvanna's "tendencies toward self-delusion and shiftiness," he seemed again as in 1956 to "have wide support" as the leader whom the Laotians generally considered to be the best qualified to achieve their "deeply desired but elusive goal" of "quietude" after a period of prolonged conflict.

3. The new Cabinet represented an "exceptionally broad spectrum of Lao political life," encompassing "all shades except Pathet Lao," and two minor tribal groups. The only known leftist in the Cabinet was Quinim Pholsena, and it was significant that he had been shifted to a "relatively minor portfolio" from Interior (the post that he held in the Souvanna Government proposed on 15 August but never approved by the King). On balance the Cabinet was anti-Communist and pro-West. However, it remained to be seen whether it could function effectively or endure long with such disparate elements.

4. Souvanna had taken office under conditions which seemed favorable for his announced policy of restoring peace in the country and ending fratricidal

warfare. While it was not at all certain how representative was Kong Le's rebellion, it remained significant that it was generated from within an elite unit of the FAL, consistently assessed by the US as strongly anti-Pathet Lao.

5. The Kong Le coup had also pointed up personal frictions among senior Lao military leaders and serious dissatisfaction among junior officers. The US had to assume, therefore, that the FAL had been weakened for the time being and the Pathet Lao strengthened, morally and materially, by receipt of arms and by its infiltration of the Vientiane area.

6. The great question was the extent to which the Souvanna Government would attempt to placate the Communists. Souvanna had called for general amnesty and reconciliation, had sought a meeting with the Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanouvong, and reportedly had mentioned integrating a Pathet Lao battalion into the FAL and 50 Pathet Lao civil servants into the Administration. The US feared that the Pathet Lao would seek to enmesh Souvanna in protracted discussions and eventually extract major concessions. While anti-Communist ministers, notably Phoumi, should help arrest such a trend, it should be remembered that in the past Souvanna had kept discussions to himself and had often acted on his own without Cabinet approval.

7. With regard to Souvanna's announced policy of "genuine" neutrality, the US must be prepared to see its allies, except for Thailand and Vietnam, either acquiesce in or welcome such a policy.

In spite of these hopeful signs, the Ambassador was directed to caution Souvanna that the US, while sympathetic to the efforts of the Premier to restore peace to his country, could not support him if he came under "substantial control" of the Communist-dominated Pathet Lao. (See item 5 September 60).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 269, 2 Sep 60.

3 Sep

In response to the 2 September inquiry (see item) by the Department of State, the US Ambassador to Laos responded as follows:

1. Souvanna had assured the Ambassador that he was most anxious for Phoumi to come to Vientiane and take up his duties.

2. Kong Le's influence, though "difficult [to] define precisely," was "undoubtedly still considerable." His military influence would be significant so long as he remained in control of the 2d Paratroop Battalion and as long as it was located in a position to influence events in the Vientiane area. Kong Le's political influence remained strong because of the popularity of the stated objectives of his coup (see item 10 August 60). Souvanna, however, had "considerable influence" over the paratroop captain, and General Ouane was attempting "gradually [to] isolate Kong Le from his key officers." He believed, therefore, that although

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Kong Le [was] still a key figure, his capacity to "cause trouble" was gradually decreasing.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 459, 3 Sep 60.

4 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos reported to the Secretary of State that the "essential next step" in Laos was to arrange Phoumi's participation in the Laotian Government to help make it work and to provide pro-Western influence and "back-stiffening." Phoumi had stated, to a PEO officer, that his reasons for not returning to Vientiane were 1) it was not safe, and 2) his return would constitute acceptance of a regime which was turning the country over to the Communists. The Ambassador therefore recommended that, in addition to seeking the clarifications and giving the warnings directed by the Department (see item 2 September 60), he 1) send Phoumi a message stating categorically that the US would not support him if he acted alone, and 2) try to persuade Premier Sarit of Thailand to urge Phoumi to enter the Government and fight for his objectives from within. (See item 5 September 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 462, 4 Sep 60.

5 Sep

The Pathet Lao broadcast its reply to Prince Souvanna's offer of negotiations. They listed the following four conditions that would have to be met before discussions could begin: 1) immediate dismissal of all right-wing ministers from the new Government; 2) an immediate end to fighting in Laos; 3) release of all political prisoners in the country; and 4) a policy of strict neutrality, diplomatic recognition of all countries regardless of their form of government, and acceptance of "unconditional aid" from any country.

NYT, 6 Sep 60, 10.

5 Sep

In response to instructions from the Department of State (see item 2 September 60), the US Ambassador to Laos put the following questions to Premier Souvanna:

1. Could Phoumi be genuinely afraid for his safety? Souvanna replied, "Why should he be? He will sleep with me, eat with me, stay in my house."

2. What did he expect from the Pathet Lao? Souvanna replied that they should lay down their arms in order to be reintegrated into Laotian national life.

3. Did he expect the PL to ask for new elections? Souvanna answered that they probably would, in which case the Government was in an awkward position because, as a result of partly rigged elections, there was not a single Pathet Lao deputy. He did not, however, intend to have any Pathet Lao in the Government.

4. Did he expect the Pathet Lao to ask for diplomatic relations with Hanoi and Peking? Souvanna replied that, in view of the representation from Nationalist China, he did not see how he could avoid it. A possible alternative would be to invite Moscow but not Peking or Hanoi.

5. What was his attitude toward the Army? Souvanna replied it was essential to preserve it.

6. What did he think of the PEO? Souvanna said, "I think we should not renew the contract."
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 465, 5 Sep 60.

5 Sep

In response to the recommendation of Ambassador Brown (see item 4 September 60), the US Ambassador to Thailand urged upon the senior Thai officer responsible for contacts between Sarit and Phoumi the desirability of Phoumi's taking up his position in the Government, stating that the US was prepared to furnish such support as feasible to help the Laotian Government control Kong Le. The Thai officer replied that Phoumi feared for his personal safety and would not go to Vientiane unless Souvanna lived up to an alleged agreement to appoint General Bounleuth as FAL Commander in Chief.
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 427, 5 Sep 60.

5 Sep

In view of Phoumi's position as reported by the US Ambassador to Laos (see item 4 September 60), the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs directed the Ambassador to present to Souvanna the following US "views:"

1. The US desires to support the Souvanna Government with Phoumi as a member. But it does not see how any meaningful support could be rendered in a situation where the Laotian Government was unable to establish control of its administrative capital, and a key figure in the cabinet was unable safely to enter the city.

2. Government control of Vientiane could be achieved by appointing a commander of military forces in the city, personally loyal to the Government, and the movement of a battalion of new troops to Vientiane.

The Ambassador was instructed to inform Phoumi of this presentation but to warn him that the US would not support a separatist movement. (See item 6 September 60.)
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 275, 5 Sep 60.

6 Sep

Pursuant to instructions of the Department of State (see item 5 September 60), Ambassador Brown sent Phoumi the following telegram:

Have today urged strongly on Souvanna importance insuring your safety Vientiane. He assures me you entirely safe. USG believes your participation in government most important. US cannot support you in any separatist movement or effort to resolve situation by force.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 476, 6 Sep 60.

6 Sep

The US Ambassador to Laos called on Souvanna and made the following points (see item 5 September 60):

1. Bounleuth should be given a high command post; to which Souvanna replied that he would be made deputy chief of staff.

2. The 2d Paratroop Battalion should be withdrawn from the city; to which Souvanna replied that the Battalion was in the process of withdrawing.

3. Troops satisfactory to the government should be brought into the city; to which Souvanna replied that there were already five or six battalions present.

In response to a question from the Ambassador as to what had been done to reassure Phoumi of his personal safety, Souvanna replied, "I have sent him [a] telegram asking he have confidence in me and return."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 474, 6 Sep 60.

7 Sep

The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State that although the French Foreign Office believed that Souvanna's overtures to the Pathet Lao had been unwise, it felt that Phoumi constituted a "greater danger" to FAL stability than Souvanna's dealings with the pro-Communist group. The French did not expect that these contacts would result in a change of the country's basic pro-Western orientation.

In outlining the difference between the French view of Phoumi and that of the US, the Foreign Office said its Government believed that Phoumi no longer represented a "useful political force." He had sought to establish personal control over the FAL and to use it for his own political ends. Phoumi himself, continued the Foreign Office, had revealed that he had prepared a coup in December 1959.

The French believed that Laos should have a strong government, but not a "strong man" and should devote itself to achieving stability through administrative and social reforms. Phoumi could play a "useful" role in Souvanna's Government as a counterpoise to Kong Le and to leftist pressures, but any political role beyond this "constituted danger for peace of area."

A further aspect of the Laotian problem that the French disliked was the Thai support of Phoumi. This could lead to SEATO involvement as the result of Thailand pursuing a "strictly national-interest policy" in Laos. In a treaty area, concluded the Foreign Office, no one country had the right to pursue a "unilateral" policy which might put other members in a difficult position.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 966, 7 Sep 60.

7 Sep

Fearing that, unless Phoumi rejoined the Government soon, Souvanna would eject him from the Cabinet, the Secretary of State directed the Ambassador to Laos to inform the Premier that 1) Phoumi should be retained in the Cabinet, 2) that the US could support neither a Phoumi-led military attack on the legal government nor a government which appeared to be about to yield to impossible conditions imposed by a Communist-led Pathet Lao, 3) therefore, the steps recommended by the Department (see item 5 September 60) to assure Phoumi's safety in Vientiane should be taken (see item 8 September 60).

In addition, the Ambassador in Bangkok was to attempt to persuade Premier Sarit to urge Phoumi to return to Vientiane. (See item 9 September 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 285, 7 Sep 60.

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8 Sep

In accordance with his instructions (see item 7 September) Ambassador Brown discussed Phoumi's participation in the Laotian Government with Souvanna. The Premier then agreed to further concessions designed to encourage General Phoumi to return to Vientiane: 1) General Bounleuth to be deputy chief of staff; 2) General Amkha to be deputy commander in chief instead of Kong Le; and 3) Phoumi to be allowed to bring with him a paratroop battalion of his own choice.
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 487, 10 Sep 60; and 492, 8 Sep 60.

8 Sep

In Saigon two high Vietnamese Government officials expressed to a US embassy officer their opinion that the US had handled the crisis in Laos "abominably." The US, said the Vietnamese, had permitted a situation to develop which would lead to a Communist takeover of the country. They felt that the US should have "backed up" Phoumi. The two officials also asked if the US would let the Communists take over South Vietnam if a similar situation developed there.
(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 558, 8 Sep 60.

9 Sep

Premier Sarit, accepting the proposal made to him by the US Ambassador in Bangkok (see item 7 September 60), sent a message to Phoumi urging him to return to Vientiane.
(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 451, 9 Sep 60, and 462, 10 Sep 60.

10 Sep

In an interview at Savannakhet, an embassy officer and the US Military Attache to Laos urged Phoumi to return to Vientiane to take up his position in the government. The two US representatives stated their case in consonance with the US position as described in cables to the Embassy in Laos (see items 5 and 7 September 60). Shortly before the end of the interview Phoumi stated that an announcement would be made in a few minutes of a revolution against the Souvanna Government in the name of Boun Oum.

In the announcement, broadcast from Savannakhet, Boun Oum declared his Revolutionary Party had seized power and abolished the Constitution to protect the country from the Souvanna Government which had opened the country to Communist aggression from North Vietnam.
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 501, 502, and (U) 503, all 10 Sep 60.

10 Sep

The Secretary of State directed Ambassador Brown to seek an audience with King Savang and make the following points:

1. The US believed that Laos was, for the first time since independence, facing a real threat of dismemberment, a situation which would aid the PL in achieving its objective of taking over the country.
2. Under these circumstances the US saw no peaceful solution unless the King exerted his authority. The US wished to know how the King viewed the situation and what were his views and wishes. (See item 13 September 60.)
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 294, 10 Sep 60.

13 Sep

In response to instructions of the Secretary of State the Ambassador in Laos called on King Savang in Luang Prabang and urged that the King act to resolve the crisis confronting Laos (see item 10 September 60). The King refused to take action, stating that Souvanna had the power to restore order; let him do so or resign. According to the King, no reconciliation between Souvanna and Phoumi was possible. The former believed negotiations with the Pathet Lao were necessary; the latter believed they would be fatal. In the Ambassador's opinion, the King clearly favored Phoumi and would "do his best by inaction [to] force Souvanna's resignation." (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 522, 13 Sep 60.

15 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos informed the Secretary of State that, in view of the critical state of Laotian affairs, the US should announce support of Souvanna "wholeheartedly and openly," thereby supporting both the "greater segment of national feeling" and the "legally constituted government." Such a policy would also command the respect of major allies and powerful neutrals such as India. It would also be the "surest way [of] keeping Kong Le and his cohorts under control"

The Ambassador believed that, before giving full support to Souvanna, the US should be assured by the Premier that there would be 1) no negotiations with the Pathet Lao until the Laotian Army was reunited, 2) no Pathet Lao in the Cabinet, 3) no recognition of Communist China, North Vietnam or the Soviet Union, and 4) no elections. In addition, Souvanna should agree to direct General Ouane to establish direct relations with regional military commanders in order to facilitate PEO support of the regions, and the PEO teams should be allowed to stay until their job was finished.

There were, according to the Ambassador, two alternatives, both unacceptable. The first was all-out support of Phoumi/Boun Oum, rejected because Phoumi was in revolt against the legal government and had lost stature as the leader of anti-Communist forces because of the revolt of his elite troops and advocacy of a policy of force rather than reconciliation. The second alternative, "inaction leading probably to [the] resignation of Souvanna," was "uncertain and risky" because the Pathet Lao would take advantage of a gradually deteriorating situation.

The Ambassador recommended, therefore, that he be authorized to tell Souvanna that, if the Premier gave the necessary assurances, the US would support him completely, and that all aid to Laos would be channeled through his government. The Ambassador recommended also that if his recommendation were approved, he be allowed to see Phoumi personally to inform him of the decision to support Souvanna. (See item 16 September 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 536, 15 Sep 60.

15 Sep

In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC said that he had refrained from offering recommendations on the situation in Laos because he had regarded the problem as falling primarily into the political area. However, there had

been no satisfactory political solution. The FAL was beginning to disintegrate into factions, and its capacity to contain the PL was rapidly diminishing. This, said CINCPAC, obviously jeopardized all previous US efforts in Laos and left that country in a militarily untenable position. Therefore, CINCPAC recommended that certain measures be undertaken in order primarily to salvage the FAL and secondarily to assist the Laotians to preserve their country's independence. CINCPAC then listed five recommended measures which the JCS passed on to the Secretary of Defense on the next day. (See item 16 September 60.)
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 142358Z, 15 Sep 60, JCS Secretariat.

16 Sep

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS expressed their belief that in view of the existing serious situation in Laos "an immediate and aggressive support of General Phoumi, which he has not yet received, would be desirable." However, the JCS pointed out, General Phoumi no longer held office in the "legal Royal Laotian Government," and refused to join the Government. Accordingly, the JCS, in agreement with the views of CINCPAC (see item 15 September 60), proposed that the Secretary of Defense recommend to the Secretary of State as a matter of urgency that the following measures be undertaken:

"a. Commence supplying FAL units via Phoumi using PEO [redacted] in lieu of Ouane/Souvanna channel

"b. Advise Phoumi to prepare for submittal to King broadest possible successor government to Souvanna Phouma with distinguished, anti-Communist civilian (Boun Oum or Kou Abhay) as Prime Minister. If need be, Souvanna Phouma could be included in harmless post or given major diplomatic assignment to prevent exploitations by PL.

"c. Encourage Phoumi with King's blessing promptly to liquidate Kong Le coup group even at cost of some bloodshed.

"d. Persuade Sarit to arrange discreet transit of FAL troops through Thailand from Savannakhet to Vientiane.

"e. Prepare promptly establish new government as 'Neutral' not through rapprochement with Bloc but through reiteration of traditional Laotian neutrality." (TS) JCSM-415-60, derived from JCS 1992/847, 16 Sept 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

16 Sep

In response to the recommendations of Ambassador Brown (see item 15 September 60) the Acting Secretary of State replied as follows:

1. He agreed with the Ambassador that the US could not give "full support to Boun Oum/Phoumi camp . . . leading to their assumption of power," because it would probably drive Kong Le and his forces into alliance with the Pathet Lao, would alienate major allies and the Lao people, and would probably fail because Phoumi,

lacking internal popular support and international sympathy, might eventually be replaced by a neutralist government willing to make greater concessions to the Communists than those contemplated by Souvanna.

2. The Acting Secretary agreed with the Ambassador that inaction would be risky as it might prolong the existing stalemate.

3. Full support of Souvanna, as recommended by the Ambassador, was not acceptable to the Acting Secretary. Such action would vindicate Kong Le, would be opposed by the King, would have an adverse impact on Thailand and Vietnam, and would result in the US being "stuck with Souvanna" who just does not have the "qualifications . . . required to hold Laos against PL military and subversive tactics."

As an alternative, the Acting Secretary proposed that the US "seek [to] bring to life [a] new government which would be acceptable to [the] majority [of] patriotic elements." The Ambassador was accordingly instructed to seek an audience with the King, if by 19 September Souvanna's resignation was not imminent. In the audience, the Ambassador was to propose that the King call to Luang Prabang the leading figures of the country including Souvanna and Phoumi. They should try to make the Souvanna government as constituted on 30 August function, or, failing that, to devise a new government under a widely respected figure and including both Souvanna and Phoumi (see item 21 September 60).

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State from Bangkok that he was "appalled at [the] additional adverse effects" such a policy as Brown's would have on Thailand.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 316, 16 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 491, 16 Sep 60.

16 Sep

Ambassador Whitney forwarded to the Secretary of State the UK Foreign Office's comments on a possible solution of the Laotian crisis. The UK considered the Laotian problem to be an "internal" matter and was opposed to the idea of an appeal to the UN. Further, on the grounds that the risk of Communist intervention was too great, the UK opposed the idea of open intervention either unilaterally by a Western power or by SEATO. Although the UK believed Souvanna's chances of remaining Prime Minister were "waning," it considered it necessary for the West to "continue to push Souvanna."

(On 22 September the Ambassador concluded his report on the Foreign Office's reaction to the Laotian crisis. The UK claimed that the Souvanna Government had offered the possibility of some form of settlement with the Pathet Lao that would have brought neutrality, peace, and stability to the nation. The UK doubted that it would be possible for Phoumi and Souvanna to work together in whatever new government might emerge in Laos. Moreover, if the Phoumi faction regained its pre-August 9 influence, the UK believed that the same "pressures" that had caused the coup would build up again.)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1387, 16 Sep 60; (C) Msg, London to SecState, 1488, 22 Sep 60.

16 Sep

In response to reports that Pathet Lao forces were attacking Phoumi's garrison in the northeast Laotian town of Sam Neua, the Acting Secretary of State directed that the military supplies (see item 22 August 60) available in Thailand for Laos be airlifted directly to the beleaguered garrison at once.

The Ambassador to Laos was to inform Phoumi, Souvanna, and the British and French Ambassadors that this action was purely military to meet a security threat and was not intended to have political implications.

[On 18 September 1960 Ambassador Brown reported the delivery of a planeload of ammunition and 125 paratroopers of Phoumi's 1st Battalion to Sam Neua.]
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 315, 16 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 554, 18 Sep 60.

17 Sep

Prince Souvanna declared that the FAL was attacking Sam Neua because the military commanders of that city were loyal to General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum. On 20 September, acting under orders from General Phoumi, the Commandant of Sam Neua refused aid from the Royal Government.

NYT, 18 Sep 60, 16; 21 Sep 60, 4.

18 Sep

The US Ambassador to Laos, in commenting on the Acting Secretary of State's proposal for a new Laotian Government (see item 16 September 60), remarked that "I just don't see any respected figure on the horizon whom [the] King is likely [to] choose who could have leadership qualities or authority necessary to control Kong Le, or to avoid being widely considered as [a] Phoumi/US stooge."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 555, 18 Sep 60.

19 Sep

CINCPAC, in a message to JCS, referred to comments from the US Ambassador to Laos that indicated Phoumi was thinking of fomenting a general mutiny among FAL troops and junior officers. The addition of this disruptive force to the various stresses and strains then being applied to the FAL, said CINCPAC, could only accelerate the defection of the PL units in the FAL. Souvanna's attitude in this regard was, in CINCPAC's opinion, an additional argument in favor of CINCPAC's previous recommendation to support FAL units through Phoumi. (See item 15 September 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 192147Z, 19 Sep 60, JCS Secretariat; (S) Msg, Vientiane to JCS, 556, 18 Sep 60.

20 Sep

A Pathet Lao broadcast declared that all PL armed units had been ordered to cease military activities in northern Laos. This order, the broadcast said, was to affirm the movement's support of Prince Souvanna's neutralist government.

NYT, 21 Sep 60, 4.

20-22
Sep

The first open clashes between Souvanna's forces and those of the "Revolutionary Committee" took place near Paksane on 20 September. (The following day Premier Souvanna claimed that government forces had halted the advance of the attackers and that they

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had withdrawn to Paksane. On the 22 September, the RLG announced that the Government forces, led by Kong Le, had recaptured the town.)
NYT, 22 Sep 60, 1, 4; 23 Sep 60, 4.

21 Sep

In a television address, Premier Sarit reviewed the Laotian situation which Thailand had been "considering with utmost anxiety and concern because it has shown from the beginning obvious signs [of] Communist influence." Vientiane, said Sarit, was under Communist influence, a situation which, if it persisted, would place all Laos in Communist hands.

The Thais continued Sarit, had no desire to interfere in any manner in the internal affairs of Laos. But if Laos were to become a danger to Thailand, Sarit said, Thailand would defend itself and would hope to receive assistance and cooperation from friendly nations of the Free World.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 523, 21 Sep 60.

21 Sep

Ambassador Brown informed Souvanna, in response to instructions from the Acting Secretary of State, that the US had decided to urge the King to bring together the leading personalities of the country in order to form a new Government (see item 16 September 60). Souvanna replied that he was fully in accord with such a policy and that some reconciliation and agreement must take place. Asked if he would step down as Premier if the King desired it, Souvanna replied, "I am ready [to] retire."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 579, 21 Sep 60.

22 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos, in accordance with instructions from the Acting Secretary of State, urged the King to call an assembly of notables for the purpose of forming a new government (see item 16 September 60). The King replied that the military situation had to be taken care of first, and that he was accordingly calling a meeting of senior military commanders to find a consensus for strong defense against the Pathet Lao. Then the political situation would be dealt with. The King said that the government would be reshuffled, but that he would like to keep Souvanna as Premier and have Phoumi as Commander in Chief of the FAL.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 593, 22 Sep 60.

22 Sep

The US Ambassador to France informed the Secretary of State that the French strongly believed that the US suggestion to King Savang that he form a new Government represented "interference in Laotian internal affairs." According to the French, the US had not used "all available means" to persuade Phoumi to cooperate loyally with the legal Government. To the contrary, Phoumi had enjoyed a position of favor resulting from direct provision of supplies and money by the US. Consequently, Souvanna had been unable to unite the country, and the Pathet Lao was profiting from the resulting weakness.

In strong terms the French expressed their "regret" that the US had not consulted them before proposing to King Savang the formation of a new government. Although admitting US primary responsibility in Laos, the Foreign Office pointed out that the French had

extensive political, economic, and military interests not only in that country but also in other parts of Southeast Asia. They were "keenly aware" that if this action of the United States should lead to a "critical situation" in Southeast Asia, France would also have to pay the consequences while being a "victim of policy" in whose formulation it had been permitted no voice.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1219, 22 Sep 60.

23 Sep

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS suggested that certain steps be taken "in order to have in being at the appropriate time a plan for the United States to offer Laos to assist that nation in defeating Communist insurgency." The JCS believed that when conditions in Laos became stabilized under a government friendly to the US, that government should be encouraged to adopt a national course of action designed to remove the insurgent threat. They felt, said the JCS, that such steps were vital to the preservation of Laos' freedom, and important in precluding the necessity for implementing US or SEATO war plans. The JCS suggested that the following steps be taken:

a. The enclosed draft outline plan, prepared for the Royal Laotian Government, should be forwarded to the US Ambassador in Laos and his Country Team for study, comment and further development.

b. A joint State-DOD-ICA directive should be issued to cause the preparation of estimates of US personnel, materiel, and budgetary support required for execution of the national emergency plan of the Royal Laotian Government.

c. The expanded national plan of the Royal Laotian Government and the estimate of US support required should be reviewed jointly by the US Government agencies concerned.

d. Action should be taken to obtain the agreement and cooperation of France and the United Kingdom to include combined France/US training and operational advice to civil and military agencies.

e. When policy approval and budgetary support arrangements have been completed by US Government agencies, the US Ambassador to Laos should be required to initiate action to gain acceptance of the plan by the Royal Laotian Government.

f. Provided the plan for counter-insurgency operations is approved and implemented by the Royal Laotian Government, US personnel, materiel, and budgetary support should be provided according to the ability of the country to receive and effectively utilize such support.

In conclusion the JCS recommended that the Secretary of Defense act to obtain support of the draft outline plan and the Joint State-DOD-ICA directive, and

thereafter have both documents transmitted to the Ambassador and his Country Team and to CINCPAC for necessary action. (See items 5 October and 19 October 60.)

(TS) JCSM-419-60, derived from JCS 1992/482, 23 Dec 60, JMF 9080/3360 (27 Apr 60).

23 Sep

Two officers of the US Embassy called on Boun Oum and Phoumi in order to state the US policy position on Laos (see item 16 September 60), and to urge Phoumi to attend the meeting of military leaders as requested by the King. Phoumi replied that the US "badly misunderstood" the Savannakhet position. No separatists, Phoumi and Boun Oum were loyal to the King but felt he should either appoint a strong leader or assume leadership himself. However, there was no need for a meeting of military leaders at Luang Prabang because the split in the country was political and not military. It was between Communists and non-Communists, with Vientiane already red "up to the neck."

Phoumi refused to attend the meeting of military leaders because 1) it would be useless, and 2) Luang Prabang was not safe.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 597, 23 Sep 60.

24 Sep

In an effort to achieve maximum accord on Laos, representatives of the US, the UK, and France met at the UN and produced a working paper which received the general approval of the respective foreign ministers. The paper stated the following common objectives: 1) prevent the collapse of Laos; 2) prevent strife between the non-Communist elements; 3) preserve the territorial unity of Laos; and 4) conserve the ability of Laos to resist Communist pressures from without and within.

Two steps to be taken by the three signatory powers immediately to meet the common objectives were: 1) promote a maximum degree of coordination, and 2) make it known that while the three Governments were acting independently there was unity among them.

A subsidiary problem, but one important to the common objectives of the three powers in Laos, was to end the critical shortage of petroleum products in Laos brought about by the closing of the Thai-Lao border on 9 August. For this purpose the respective ambassadors in Bangkok should bring appropriate pressure on the Thai Government.

(S) Msg, New York to SecState, SECTO 9, 24 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, New York to SecState, SECTO 10, 24 Sep 60.

25-29
Sep

Premier Souvanna requested US help in airlifting petroleum products from Phnom Penh in order to circumvent the Thai embargo (see item 9 August 60). In response, the US Government directed Ambassador Johnson to urge Premier Sarit to permit free movement of civilian supplies to Vientiane. The Ambassador pointed out that the embargo had little effect on the Pathet Lao but was alienating Lao public opinion. The Thai Government replied that it would be willing to consider petroleum shipments to Vientiane for the "public welfare" upon receipt of a request for such shipments from the Laotian Government.

On the 28th, the Thai representative announced at a meeting of the SEATO Council that a Laotian Government request for a shipment of petroleum products was "being considered" by his Government. (See item 26-27 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 608, 25 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 340, 26 Sep 60; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 559, 23 Sep 60, and 568, 29 Sep 60.

26 Sep

The Pathet Lao resumed its attack on Sam Neua. Although the garrison's commander described the situation as "very, very serious," he said he would take help and orders only from the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet. He admitted, however, that he had received only one company of paratroopers from Savannakhet since the crisis started. (See item 16 September 60.)

(On 28 September the town fell to Kong Le and the Pathet Lao.)
NYT, 27 Sep 60, 4; 29 Sep 60.

28 Sep

Ambassador Brown reported that several Laotian military leaders, including Ouane and Phoumi, met with the King at Luang Prabang. Phoumi and Ouane reportedly agreed to a cease-fire in the Paksane area and agreed to work together against the Pathet Lao; for the time being, however, they decided to keep their commands independent of each other.

The King was also reported to have indicated displeasure with Souvanna and a desire for a new government headed by someone else. According to Ouane, Phoumi proposed Boun Oum as Premier and Souvanna and Souphanouvong as Deputy Premiers.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 646, 29 Sep 60.

28 Sep

In a cable to the Department of State, the US Embassy in London reported the British Foreign Office opinions on possible results of proposed Phoumi-Souvanna talks in Luang Prabang (see item 16 September 60). Kong Le, said the British, would resist any arrangements which would give Phoumi the power to retaliate against the coup leader. Further, Phoumi would not give up his present "power position" unless he, too, could be assured against retaliation. Turning to the idea that Souvanna and Phoumi might work together under a mutually agreed upon Prime Minister, the Foreign Office suggested Phoui Sananikone as the man to head the new Government.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 1563, 28 Sep 60.

29 Sep

Premier Souvanna admitted to Ambassador Brown that negotiations were under way for an exchange of diplomatic missions between the Lao and Soviet Governments. In response to Brown's warnings of the dangers inherent in such a course, Souvanna replied that the exchange of diplomatic envoys was necessary to satisfy the craving of the Lao people for a policy of neutrality.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 626, 27 Sep 60.

29 Sep

In a statement to the UN General Assembly, Prince Sihanouk, the Cambodian Chief of State, urged an end to foreign influences and pressures in Laos and suggested that the two "Blocs" agree to remove Cambodia and Laos from "the list of their zones of rivalry," and consider them as buffer states. This neutrality belt should be "seriously and solemnly" guaranteed by the Western Powers and their allies. (See item 12 December 60.)

(U) Msg, New York to SecState, 846, 30 Sep 60; NYT, 30 Sep 60, 8.

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1 Oct

The Secretary of State directed Ambassador Brown to inform King Savang that, in view of the deterioration of military and political leadership in Laos, "no further payment of troops or other forms of aid [were] to be forthcoming until" the King 1) assumed leadership of the Government himself or named a Premier other than Souvanna, and 2) named a Commander in Chief who could unite the bitterly divided remnants of the FAL.

However, the Ambassador was informed that the suspension of aid did not preclude supplying troops in action against the Pathet Lao or on the front lines, even if the necessary supplies had to be procured from stocks outside the country. Specifically, the direct aid to Phoumi already authorized (see item 15 September 60) was to be continued.

(TS, Eyes Only) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 365, 1 Oct 60; Vientiane to SecState, 662, 20 Oct 60; (TS, Eyes Only) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 368, 3 Oct 60. Both in CJCS 091 (Laos).

1 Oct

In a statement broadcast over the Hanoi radio, the NLHX announced that, providing the following conditions were met, it was ready to negotiate with Souvanna's Government:

- 1) Establishment of a coalition Government, to include Pathet Lao representation in the Cabinet.
 - 2) Establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Communist China, and North Vietnam.
 - 3) Laotian opposition to SEATO, and an end to the UN "presence" in Laos.
 - 4) An end to attacks on the Pathet Lao movement and the release of all its members in prison.
 - 5) Continued opposition to the Right-wing forces that rebelled against the neutralist Government.
- NYT, 2 Oct 60, 3; 7 Oct 60, 4.

1 Oct

Premier Souvanna announced at a press conference that he was sending representatives to resume control for the Government of Sam Neua. These representatives were stopped by the Pathet Lao and prevented from carrying out their mission.

(S) DIB, 4 Oct 60, 3; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 657, 1 Oct 60.

1 Oct

The US Ambassador to Laos severely criticized Premier Souvanna for dismissing Generals Phoumi, Bounleuth and 25 other officers. The Ambassador pointed out that the efforts of the past weeks for renewed unity and understanding within the FAL had been placed in jeopardy just as they were beginning to show signs of success. This situation was made worse by the fact that on 30 September Kong Le had told the press he had been urging Souvanna for several days to sign the dismissal order.

The Ambassador then emphasized the need for political discussions soon for the purpose of finding

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agreement between the Souvanna and Phoumi factions. The Premier replied by urging the Ambassador to use US influence to persuade Phoumi to accept the Souvanna Government, which was the legal regime, and to disband the Revolutionary Committee at Savannakhet.
(S) Msg. Vientiane to SecState, 658, 1 Oct 60.

3 Oct Ambassador Brown, while agreeing that it was "imperative [to] get the King [to] bring political figures together and force unity" (see item 1 October 60), warned the Secretary of State that forced removal of Souvanna was unwise because 1) neither the King nor any political figure could be found to replace him, and 2) it would "have consequences in terms [of] PL insurgency . . . almost impossible to combat in [the] present stage [of] disintegration [of the] country and [the] FAL."

(TS, Eyes Only) Msg. Vientiane to SecState, 669, 3 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

3 Oct ~~SECRET~~ renewed attacks by Kong Le forces against Phoumi's troops, the JCS authorized CINCPAC to take immediately any or all of the following actions to prevent another defeat, which could be fatal to the portion of the FAL loyal to Phoumi:

1. Provide necessary arms and supplies.
2. Deliver the Laotian paratroop battalion training at Lopburi, Thailand, to Phoumi at whatever location CINCPAC felt best.
3. Air-lift other Phoumi forces as desirable.
4. Direct Chief, PEO, to attempt to persuade Generals Ouane and Phoumi to make a joint effort to save Laos. (See item 4 October 60.)
(S) Msg. JCS to CINCPAC, 983752, 3 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

4 Oct The US Ambassador in Paris reported French Foreign Office reactions to the situation in Laos. The French believed that the situation required the US, the UK, and France to give "joint and energetic" support to a Laotian program of national unity in support of the King and to a legal government from which the PL would be excluded. The French also emphasized that they saw no alternative to Souvanna. To remove him in the present crisis, they said, could lead only to "chaos."

The Foreign Office pointed out that the guarantees they had received from Souvanna not to include the PL in his Government and to seek the unity of his country were in accord with the Tripartite Agreement on Laos (see item 24 September 60).

Souvanna had done all he could to unify the nation, the Foreign Office continued, but Phoumi had reneged from the very start on his duties agreed upon at Luang Prabang. Souvanna was in a "very weak" position. The Army, badly split, was becoming increasingly ineffectual. Phoumi was losing control even over the troops in the south, and this, the Foreign Office pointed out, left the field "dangerously" clear for the Pathet Lao. (According to French

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reports, on three occasions Phoumi's troops had defected to the PL, and it was the French belief that in the 2d military region, the PL could do just about anything it wished.)

Although the French had no objection to the US proposal to make a third attempt (see item 16 September 60) with the King to reconcile Souvanna, Phoumi, and Boun Oum, they had no "illusion" concerning its chances of success. They did not believe Phoumi would agree to a reconciliation and pointed out that his proposal for Souphannouvong's acceptance in the Government was clearly not consistent with the three-power agreement. The US proposal to advise King Savang to appoint a new Government and to inform him that the US would not support Souvanna would be, according to the French, the "height of folly" at this time. Further, the Foreign Office believed that in taking this step without previous consultations with the French, the US was violating the "parallel action" envisaged in the Tripartite Agreement. It was "obvious," the Foreign Office declared, that there was "no unity between Western allies."
(TS) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1368, 4 Oct 60, CJCS C91 (Laos).

4 Oct

Pursuant to instructions from the JCS (see item 3 October 60), CINCPAC ordered Chief, PEO: to approach Phoumi and Ouane and attempt their rapprochement; to imploy CAT airlift for the movement of Phoumi's supplies and personnel; and to deliver the Lcpburi contingent to Phoumi at the place where it was most needed.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO/Laos, 7049, 4 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

4-5 Oct

Two influential Thais, SEATO Secretary General Pote Sarasin and Acting Foreign Minister Boon Charoenchai, expressed approval of Sinhanouk's proposal for a "neutral belt" composed of Cambodia and Laos (see item 29 September 60), provided that the two nations became truly "neutral" and not merely "neutralist" as a cover of respectability for Communist control. Sarasin pointed out that, in view of Phoumi's military and political ineffectiveness, the "neutral belt" might be the "only hope of salvaging anything" in Laos.
(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 601, 4 Oct 60; and 606, 5 Oct 60.

5 Oct

The Vientiane radio broadcast an announcement that the King had approved establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 674, 5 Oct 60.

5 Oct

Enclosed in a letter to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense transmitted a copy of a memorandum from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on counter-insurgency operations in Laos, along with CINCPAC's draft plan and a proposed State-Defense-ICA message (see item 23 September 60). The Secretary stated that he agreed in principle with comments of the JCS and wished to make their recommendations and CINCPAC's draft plan available to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of Defense requested the Secretary of State's early comment on, or concurrence with, the proposed message. (See item 19 October 60.)
(TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, no subj, 5 Oct 60, JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60).

6 Oct

In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of State, the Ambassador to Laos in an audience with the King informed him of the cessation of US military aid and the conditions for its resumption (see item 1 October 60). In response, the King replied that he could not act on either condition. He would not take steps to bring about the replacement of the Souvanna Government nor would he appoint a new military commander.

In spite of repeated urging by the Ambassador who said that "if no action [were] taken all might be lost," the King, as he had done in the past, protested that as a constitutional monarch there was nothing he could do unless the Government resigned.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 683, 6 Oct 60.

6 Oct

The US Ambassador in Bangkok recommended to the Department of State that, "if assessment of [Phoumi's] capabilities [were] favorable," covert and semi-covert support be provided him as an intermediate stage before undertaking "exclusive overt support."

In either event the US should be prepared to give "categorical assurances we would back up [the] Thai and come to their aid if they got in trouble" participating in such action.

The Ambassador recommended that in order to make such intervention as effective as possible, "direct and effective operating relationships" be established between PEO, [redacted] and the US Embassy in Thailand.

(US, Eyes Only) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 615, 6 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

6 Oct

The US Ambassador in London informed the Department of State that, in the opinion of the British Foreign Office, it would be better if Phoumi were either "utterly" defeated or "integrated" into the Government, because his continuing opposition was forcing Souvanna to rely upon Pathet Lao support, thus giving the latter an opportunity to spread its influence. The "elimination" of Phoumi would permit Souvanna to take a stand independent of support from the PL, thereby placing him in a position of "increased strength" for negotiations with the pro-Communist group. At the same time, however, the Foreign Office believed that nothing should be done to "rupture" the cease-fire agreement, which they viewed as the "best hope" for the future peace and stability of the country.

From the British viewpoint, Souvanna was now the only leader who could bring Laos through as a non-Communist, although neutralist, country. There was no one else at the moment under whom disparate factions would be prepared to work.

The British believed that the US was being "somewhat disingenuous" in cutting off aid to Laos. Phoumi, the British said, would continue to obtain help from Thailand. Souvanna's Government, on the other hand, would suffer from an aid cut, to the profit of the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1700, 6 Oct 60.

7 Oct

In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC recommended against the reinforcement of Phoumi's forces either by the Thai Police Aerial Resupply Unit or by the Thai Ranger Battalion because such action would constitute an invitation to overt intervention by the Viet Minh or Chinese Communists.

In CINCPAC's opinion, however, decisive action was needed to prevent all FAL forces loyal to Phoumi from being "disintegrated" piece-meal by the Kong Le/Pathet Lao forces. This "disintegration" could only be prevented by outside support, including leadership by US advisers at battalion level. Mere supply, pay, and lift would not be enough in view of the serious weakness of Laotian military leadership.

Since military action could not take place in a vacuum, CINCPAC proposed the following political and military steps:

1. Ambassador Brown should tell the King that the US, determined to prevent the loss of Laos to Communism, was directing all its aid to the Savannakhet forces. If the King wished to cooperate he should immediately proclaim a new Government with Phoumi as Minister of Defense.
 2. With or without the King, the US should move vigorously to support the Savannakhet group, including assignment of advisers at the battalion level.
 3. If the King did not go along and if the Lao troops, even with US leaders, failed to fight, the US should abandon Laos and concentrate on the defense of Vietnam and Thailand.
- (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 983946, 6 Oct 60;
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8352, 7 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

7 Oct

In view of the King's unwillingness to assume the responsibility requested of him (see items 1 and 6 October 60), high ranking representatives of the JCS, CIA, Department of Defense, and Department of State met and agreed to make one last, desperate effort to work with Souvanna "as the legal facade of legitimate government," while supporting Phoumi and other anti-Communist forces at the same time. But continued support by the US for Souvanna was to be contingent upon "his concurrence with the following actions:"

1. Movement of the seat of government to Luang Prabang where it would be near the King and not imperiled by the Kong Le threat.
2. The taking of all feasible steps to prevent Kong Le from initiating action against any FAL units, and desisting immediately from any threat or hostile act against Savannakhet.
3. The taking of all feasible precautions, through Ouane and his forces, with the advice of the PEO, to preserve the Treasury assets of the Government.

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4. The desisting from negotiations with the Pathet Lao until the Government was able to talk from a position of unity and strength.

CINCPAC, with the cooperation of Chief, PEO, and Chief, JUSMAAG, Thailand, was directed to supply General Phoumi's forces directly, because the precarious political situation precluded supply through the centralized military agencies of the Laotian Government. Special military and political advisors were to facilitate the logistical operations and to insure that Phoumi understood the "overall plan and concept" under which direct supply was to be undertaken (see item 8 October 60). In particular, Phoumi was to understand that he would be subject to Souvanna's Government if it met the conditions set forth above. The Department of State was to inform the French, British, and Australian Governments of the "overall plan;" the Ambassador in Thailand was to inform the Thai Government.

A special mission including the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Parsons, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Irwin, and the Chief of Staff of CINCPAC, Vice Admiral Riley, were to go to the Far East to consult with the Ambassador, explain the "thinking and details" of the plan, and carry out "any other representation deemed advisable."
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 384, 8 Oct 60.

7 Oct

Premier Souvanna stated to Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Government was about to begin negotiations with the Pathet Lao (see item 11 October 60). These talks, according to the Premier, would be confined to 1) acceptance of the NLHX as an equal member of the body politic through supplemental elections to the General Assembly; and 2) integration of a Pathet Lao battalion into the FAL.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 694, 8 Oct 60.

8 Oct

The JCS directed CINCPAC to furnish the operational and logistic guidance called for in the US policy decision to support General Phoumi (see item 7 October 60) as follows:

1. The Acting Chief, PEO, was to establish as large a permanent mission as he considered necessary with Phoumi's forces in order to carry out the missions. PEO personnel were not to serve in combat, however.

2. Transport of supplies was authorized and directed to Phoumi's forces in the 3rd and 4th Military Regions and to anti-Communist elements in the other regions as feasible.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 984040, 8 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

8 Oct

In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC stated that: 1) US military advisory personnel in Laos were sufficient to provide adequate effective field advisory support to Phoumi in the operations envisaged; and 2) Laos MAP supplies at Bangkok were

not adequate to support combat operations, but would be so when outstanding PEO requisitions had been filled.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 983974, 7 Oct 60;
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8761, 8 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

8 Oct

The Secretary of State, in a message to Ambassador Brown, reported preliminary personal reactions from the British and Australian Embassies in Washington on the US proposed plan of action in Laos (see item 7 October 60).

Both Embassies had questioned the feasibility and desirability of moving the Government to Luang Prabang. They had seen a conflict between that proposal and the condition that Souvanna take steps to exert authority over Kong Le, and they had expressed concern that Kong Le, if isolated in Vientiane, would move even closer to the PL.

They had felt that Souvanna would have difficulty stopping negotiations with the PL whose representatives were already in Vientiane. The Australian Embassy expressed the opinion that, rather than preclude negotiations entirely, the US should try to set "clearly defined limits" for Souvanna, beyond which he could not go in negotiations with the PL.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 389, 8 Oct 60.

9 Oct

As instructed, the Ambassador to Laos presented a demarche to Souvanna (see item 7 October 60). The Premier stated he had already considered moving the government to Luang Prabang and thought such a move could be arranged. He indicated there would be no difficulty in restraining Kong Le and safeguarding the assets of the government. To suspend negotiations with the Pathet Lao, however, would be very difficult, as the arrangements had already been made, and it was important to reach a settlement as soon as possible.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 708, 9 Oct 60.

11 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported that negotiations between the Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao opened at the Prime Ministry in Vientiane. Quinim, recognized as the most leftist Cabinet member, according to the Ambassador, headed the Laotian Government delegation.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 744, 14 Oct 60;

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 718, 11 Oct 60.

11 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the French had given "general support" to the US proposed plan of action in Laos (see item 7 October 60). The French believed, however, that before the government was moved to Luang Prabang, definite means of governing and controlling Vientiane should be established. According to the French, there were "clear" indications of Kong Le-PL collaboration, and they believed it would be particularly serious to leave Kong Le alone in the capital without adequate control, especially because US aid to Phoumi had increased the risk of throwing Kong Le into the PL

camp. Although the French had always regretted that Souvanna had entered into negotiations with the PL, they now felt that these negotiations should be "dragged out" so that Souvanna could obtain breathing space in order to reconstitute national unity.

14 Oct

(S) Msg. SecState to Vientiane, 400, 11 Oct 60.
Assistant Secretary Parsons reported to the Secretary of State that the suspension of US aid to Laos was having the following unfavorable consequences:

1. The Laotian Government, beset by the Pathet Lao and the Phoumi rebels, might accept an aid offer from the recently arrived Soviet mission.
2. The Laotian Government was resorting to deficit financing to pay its bills, thereby endangering the stability of the currency and the whole economic structure of the country.
3. The Laotian Government might seek to embarrass the US by questioning the legality of US support for the Phoumi rebel group under Mutual Security legislation which specified aid to "nations" but not to "groups."

Parsons had therefore authorized, as a stop-gap measure, release of about \$100,000 for various non-controversial economic projects.

14 Oct

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 663, 14 Oct 60.
Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that Thai Premier Sarit was encouraged by the US demarche to Souvanna (see item 9 October 60) and by other indications that the US was moving to deal with the Lao situation. While not specifically approving US action, Sarit stated he was prepared to cooperate fully.

At the same time, the Ambassador warned that suspension of US aid to Laos (see item 1 October 60), plus the establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union (see item 5 October 60), had given the impression to Thailand that Laos was rapidly passing into the Communist orbit.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, unnumbered, 14 Oct 60.

14 Oct

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that he approve terms of reference, as a basis for coordination with the Department of State, for the assignment of a US military advisor to General Phoumi. The civilian US Special Advisor to the General, said the JCS, had expressed the view that General Phoumi needed and would welcome a full time US Military Advisor. CINCPAC and the interdepartmental working group on Laos had agreed to such an appointment. The terms of reference proposed by the JCS were as follows:

- a. . . . [The selected officer] is designated the personal U.S. military advisor to General Phoumi Nosavan. In this latter capacity he is authorized and directed to report directly to CINCPAC, informing Chief, PEO as appropriate. His designation for this

additional function will be transmitted by separate action through appropriate official channels.

b. He will maintain closest possible continuing liaison with General Phoumi, for the purpose of furnishing information to CINCPAC on General Phoumi's plans, activities, and requirements, and in order to assist General Phoumi.

c. In the execution of this responsibility, his functions will include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) Advise and assist General Phoumi in immediate measures to improve the morale and combat efficiency of forces under General Phoumi's control.

(2) Advise and assist General Phoumi in the planning and direction of military operations.

(3) Assist and advise General Phoumi in the orderly planning of necessary logistic support; and in the effective utilization of such supplies as are delivered.

CINCPAC was directed by JCS to issue the "terms of reference" stated above as instructions to the officer designated as Phoumi's military advisor.

(S) JCSM-468-60, derived from JCS 1992/855, 14 Oct 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60); (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 984377, 14 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

16 Oct

Assistant Secretary Parsons, reporting the findings of his visit to Laos to the Secretary of State, described the three factors needed to salvage the situation in Laos: 1) Souvanna must acquiesce in US policy and actions for as long as he remained in office; 2) the anti-Communist elements must regain control of Laotian Government policy and defeat a greatly strengthened Pathet Lao; 3) The US must support anti-Communists in Laos and at the same time avoid indictment in the UN, further cleavage in SEATO, and alignment of the French and British against the US.

Parsons warned that Souvanna could place the US in an impossible situation by demanding a halt to US support of Phoumi or demanding the withdrawal of the PEO. Moreover, Phoumi's forces had not performed well in combat, and anti-Communist leaders in Vientiane did "little but wring their hands."

The US should, concluded Parsons: 1) find the basis for resuming budgetary support of the RLG; 2) eliminate Souvanna's power to destroy US policy at any moment by requesting removal of PEO and cessation of aid to Phoumi; 3) extricate itself from the untenable position of supporting a group of rebels, for which support the US could be "hailed defenseless

before the UN;" and 4) accept the fact that only over the long haul could military forces be built up to the point where they would have the will and capacity to restore the status quo ante the Kong Le coup.

(Assistant Secretary of Defense Irwin, in a report submitted the previous day, had differed with Parsons regarding aid for Phoumi. While recognizing the political risks involved, he recommended that the overriding consideration should be adequate support of the General; the additional effort needed to make such support effective should be made since it did not create a risk but simply increased the risk.)
(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 668, 15 Oct 60, and 673, 16 Oct 60.

17-18 Oct

In accordance with instructions from Assistant Secretary Parsons, Ambassador Brown urged Souvanna to agree to distribution by the US of supplies direct to all Laotian units, including those of Phoumi. The Premier agreed, provided Phoumi recognized the Souvanna Government. A decision would be deferred, however, pending the return of an emissary sent to Phoumi to seek such recognition.

To encourage a favorable decision, the Ambassador recommended the following further action to the Secretary of State: 1) Tell Souvanna that resumption of US aid was dependent upon inclusion of aid for Phoumi; 2) Pending a reply from Souvanna on (1) above, load supplies for earliest delivery to Phoumi because of the Pathet Lao build up in the north; 3) Tell Phoumi he must make a reasonable response to Souvanna's feeler.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 676, 17 Oct 60;
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 765, 17 Oct 60; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 420, 17 Oct 60; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 771, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, for reasons of expediency, the US Government had accepted "the inevitable of working with Souvanna Phouma as the constitutional and legally installed Prime Minister." The course of action and desired conditions set forth on 7 October (see item) would remain as valid and basic goals, but could not be achieved as soon as desired. In conformity with this concept, the Secretary of State listed the following tasks as appropriate: 1) continue to press Souvanna to extricate himself from the influence of Kong Le; 2) failing this extrication, "take whatever feasible steps present themselves" to encourage his replacement in favor of another legally appointed Prime Minister; 3) remove as much of the treasury as possible from Vientiane; 4) continue efforts to control or neutralize Kong Le; as a minimum remove him from Vientiane; 5) exert maximum pressure to slow down and, if possible, sabotage Souvanna's negotiations with the Pathet Lao; 6) urge Phoumi to dissolve his Revolutionary Committee "voluntarily," so that he would cease to be legally a rebel.

As a result of this new evaluation, the Secretary of State authorized Ambassador Brown to lift the "temporary embargo" resulting from suspension of "certain categories" of aid to Laos.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 425, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

At a meeting with Assistant Secretary Irwin and Admiral Riley at Ubon, Thailand, General Phoumi stated his intention to gain control of Laos by "retaking" Vientiane. This attack, to be undertaken by troops of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Military Regions, would require US equipment and supplies.

Irwin informed General Phoumi that aid to his forces would be limited because of the "proper relationships" maintained by the US toward the Vientiane Government which had declared Phoumi and his supporters to be rebels. The general should, therefore, avoid "independent and uncoordinated actions" and follow closely the guidance of his US military and political advisors. Admiral Riley emphasized that the "unique political situation" compelled the US to "exercise restraint offensively" until the anti-Communist element became the legal government. Until such a government was achieved Phoumi should concentrate on the following:

1. Consolidation of strength in the South to achieve an "impregnable defense against [the] Pathet Lao and Kong Le."
2. Unification of all anti-Communist elements in the country.
3. Preparation of "offensive plans for later implementation after [the] consolidation stage." These plans should be submitted, via the US military advisor, to CINCPAC for approval.

Phoumi replied that his views coincided with those of the Admiral, but imminent Pathet Lao attacks and the rapid movement of Vientiane to the left, demonstrated by the installation of a Soviet embassy there, might make "quick, effective action" necessary. [To which Irwin and Riley replied that no direct attack to capture Vientiane should be undertaken except with the approval of a new, legal, anti-Communist Government.]

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 686, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

Assistant Secretary Irwin, reporting the findings of his trip to Laos, concluded that no improvement could be expected in the US position there so long as Souvanna remained Premier. The US should therefore attempt to bring about Souvanna's resignation or removal through the King's intervention. Until such a resignation took place, the US would be in the politically hazardous position of maintaining relations with the legal Laotian Government while giving covert support to a force in rebellion against it. Although Irwin agreed with Parson's estimate of the dangers involved (see item 16 October 60), he felt that the US should not be deterred from rendering "substantial assistance" to Phoumi in a "careful and cautious manner" so long as Souvanna remained in power. Failure to do so would risk the ultimate loss of Laos to the Communists.

Action already taken, such as the assignment of PEO personnel to Phoumi's forces, had been helpful,

but in Irwin's opinion, the US should give serious consideration to further steps such as assignment of US military advisors at battalion level and the employment of "a few" US, Thai, or Vietnamese volunteers.

(TS) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 839, 18 Oct 60.

19 Oct

In a message to CINCPAC, Admiral Riley stated his disagreement with the Laotian policy advocated by Assistant Secretary Parsons (see item 16 October 60). Riley believed that the overriding consideration was to prevent, by all feasible means, the loss of Laos to communism, and that limited aid would fail to sustain the anti-Communist forces.

In view of the failure of Souvanna to comply with the conditions promulgated by the US (see item 7 October 60), Riley urged as an alternative course of action securing Souvanna's removal and staunchly supporting an anti-Communist government established by the King. Pending the establishment of such a government, Riley recommended that the US accept the political risk involved and give adequate support to the anti-Communist forces in Laos.

(TS) Msg, COMUSJAPAN to CINCPAC, 191615Z, 19 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

19 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had asked the UN representative in Laos whether the UN could furnish military observers to investigate reports of incursions by the Viet Minh into Laos. The Premier was particularly anxious to forestall a return of the International Control Commission. The UN representative replied that he would transmit the request to the Secretary General, but he was not hopeful that anything would be accomplished by the request.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 785, 19 Oct 60.

19 Oct

Souvanna agreed to a US proposal that supplies be sent direct to military forces and that pay be disbursed through Vientiane. He conditioned his agreement, however, with the proviso that such aid not be used against him and that the US discourage any attempt at revolt by FAL officers of the 1st Region (Luang Prabang). These conditions were accepted by the US.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 787, 19 Oct 60;

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 19 Oct 60.

19 Oct

The Secretary of State, in a letter replying to the letter of the Secretary of Defense which forwarded a memorandum of the JCS on Counter-Insurgency Operations in Laos, stated that, in view of the existing crisis in Laos, he did not believe "our people on the spot" should be pressed to assume a task that could not be implemented (see items 23 September and 5 October 60). The plan was nevertheless being sent to Ambassador Brown for "possible future use." He felt certain, said the Secretary of State, that "if and when" the Laotian situation was stabilized, agreement could be reached between the State and Defense Departments on a joint message along the lines suggested by the JCS.

(TS) N/H of JCS 1992/842, 25 Oct 60, JMF 9060/3360 (27 Apr 60).

19 Oct

Ambassador Whitney forwarded to the Secretary of State the UK view that Souvanna and his plan to negotiate settlement with the Pathet Lao was the "only possible and practical course" for Laos. The UK appreciated the US desire to balance pro-Communist pressures on Souvanna, but had little regard for, and even less confidence in, Phoumi. The British had "little faith" in the Laotian King, and feared that Souvanna's failure might result in greater Pathet Lao influence. The UK believed that Kong Le was supporting Souvanna who desired to establish a neutral Laos not under Pathet Lao domination. But Kong Le might not continue this support, the UK warned, if there should be an attempt to reinstate Phoumi, whom Kong Le considered "corrupt and beyond the pale."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 1920, 21 Oct 60.

21 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US was opposed to UN consideration of the Laotian situation. Such action could cause the US great embarrassment and would allow the Soviet Bloc to portray the implementation of US policy in Laos as a case of intervention in the internal affairs of Laos and contrary to the spirit and letter of the UN Charter. Accordingly, the Secretary instructed the Ambassador to express US opposition to an appeal by Laos to the UN.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 440, 21 Oct 60.

22 Oct

The Secretary of State, recognizing that the Kong Le group might attempt to take over the government by another coup, invited Ambassador Brown's comments upon the following proposed courses of action:

1. Force by the Laotian Government.
 - a. Place companies of the 2d Paratroop Battalion under officers loyal to Ouane, Phoumi, or Houmphan and order these units to separate posts well away from Vientiane. Order Kong Le out of the country.
 - b. If Kong Le refused to leave, attack him using loyal troops in Vientiane and forces loyal to Ouane, Houmphan, and Phoumi, rapidly concentrated on Vientiane by air from other areas.
2. Persuasion. Seek to persuade Kong Le that his aims could best be achieved by cooperating with the government.
3. Maneuver.
 - a. Convince Kong Le's troops that their leader was being used by the Communists.
 - b. Attempt to isolate the 2d Paratroop Battalion by seeking evidences of support for a strong anti-Pathet Lao line from other Laotian Army units.
 - c. Assign a substantial portion of the 2d Paratroop Battalion away from Vientiane and gradually replace it with loyal troops.

G. Seek a strong and united appeal from respected FAL leaders to the effect that, although the motives of the 2d Paratroop Battalion were understandable, they now injured their country and the FAL.
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 444, 22 Oct 60, CJCS 091(Laos).

24 Oct

A US Embassy officer called on General Phoumi at Savannakhet and informed him of Souvanna's approval of: 1) direct supply for Phoumi's forces; and 2) the distribution of pay through the legal government at Vientiane. The Embassy officer suggested that Phoumi dissolve the Revolutionary Committee; the officer explained that the US had decided to build up the FAL in the Luang Prabang region and to discourage any revolutionary movement against the legal government in Vientiane.

General Phoumi's response was "uniformly negative." He felt that dissolution of the Committee would be meaningless because Souvanna could declare that the Committee members were still in rebellion. He complained that his paymasters would be arrested were they to go to Vientiane.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 735, 25 Oct 60.

25 Oct

The JCS circulated a memorandum from the CNO to the JCS setting forth the "Views of Leaders of the Republic of China on the Situation in the Western Pacific," including the views of President Chiang-Kai-Shek on the problem of Laos. President Chiang's remarks were reported by the Commander, Seventh Fleet, after a visit to Taiwan 14-20 October 1960. According to the Commander, the substance of Chiang's remarks was:

1) The situation in Laos had reached a very dangerous point and unless the US "takes a firm position soon it may get beyond the point of no return. Everyone is waiting for the United States to take a firm position."

2) Chiang strongly supported General Phoumi's position and suggested that the US give Thailand "unlimited backing and let the Thais handle the details." Such an approach, in Chiang's view, would have the additional advantage of keeping the US from "getting embroiled publicly" with the UK and France.
(S) JCS 1992/859, 25 Oct 60, JMF 9150/3310
(22 Oct 60).

26-27 Oct

On 26 October Premier Souvanna informed Ambassador Brown that, unless Thailand lifted the embargo on petroleum products, the Laotian Government would be forced to request the necessary supplies from the Soviet Union.

The Thai Government, in response to the persuasive efforts of Ambassador Johnson, agreed to remove the embargo the next day. This action, the Thai Foreign Minister pointed out, had nothing to do with Souvanna's threat to seek aid from the Soviet Union. (See item 25-29 September 60.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 732, 25 Oct 60, and 752, 27 Oct 60; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 826, 26 Oct 60.

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27 Oct

Ambassador Brown was informed by Souvanna that negotiations seeking to restore legal status to General Phoumi had broken down because of Phoumi's intransigence, attributed by Souvanna to US support of the General.

(S) Msg. Vientiane to SecState, 829, 26 Oct 60.

28 Oct

The Secretary of State informed the Ambassador in Laos of a new US plan of action for Laos to be used as "guidance in [the] period ahead." This plan became necessary because Souvanna: 1) had not lived up to the conditions set by the US for continued support (see item 7 October 60); 2) was rapidly losing the support of "all important non-Communist leadership elements in Laos"; 3) was opposed by the King; and 4) therefore would not be able "to pull Army and non-Communist Lao elements together and provide leadership to [the] country in standing up to [the] PL threat."

The new US plan contained the following elements designed to achieve a new Laotian Government without inviting a "desperate reaction by Souvanna . . . against the US" or a "general outbreak of military action by PL forces":

1. "Exfiltrate" a quorum of the National Assembly from Vientiane to Luang Prabang.
 2. Encourage Phoui to go to Luang Prabang at the strategic moment.
 3. In the event of a vote of no confidence in Souvanna by the Assembly, a declaration against him by Quane, or a coup against him by the Kong Le group, Souvanna probably would accept an invitation by the King to go to Luang Prabang for consultations.
 4. At Luang Prabang, Souvanna "would agree" to step down in favor of Phoui who would form a new government including Phoumi and Souvanna.
 5. Such a solution should be acceptable to all non-Communists in Laos as well as to the British, French, Australians, Thais, and Vietnamese.
- (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 466, 28 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

28 Oct

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the Government of the Republic of China's Ambassador to Thailand had informed him of a long talk with Phoui Sananikone, just arrived in Bangkok. According to the Chinese Ambassador, Phoui was willing to work with Phoumi to establish a new Laotian Government. Phoui's plan was to bring about an Assembly session at Luang Prabang, where he would debate Souvanna's policy and seek a vote of confidence from the Assembly. With Phoumi's support, Phoui was confident that such a vote could be won. (See item 29 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 763, 28 Oct 60.

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29 Oct

The Ambassador in Laos advised the Secretary of State that Phoui Sananikone, although an "experienced and proven pro-West and anti-Communist political leader," had jeopardized his present usefulness by sharp past differences with the King and Phoumi. The Ambassador felt, therefore, that the US should proceed cautiously in any encouragement of Phoui's proposed course of action. (See item 28 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 847, 29 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

29 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported that Souvanna had retreated somewhat from his intransigent attitude on talks with Phoumi and had sent a cordial message to Phoumi suggesting that paymasters be sent to Vientiane to collect the pay for Phoumi's forces.

The Premier also professed willingness to accept representatives of Phoumi into the Government, provided that members of the NLHX were admitted also. The Ambassador protested vigorously, saying such a policy would lead to disaster for Laos and would cost Souvanna the support of the US which could not afford to support a Government including "persons directed by Communists."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 845, 29 Oct 60.

4 Nov

In a message to Ambassadors Brown and Johnson the Secretary of State agreed that Phoui should "explore the situation and sound out views of key people at Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Savannakhet" in order to: 1) develop a solution to the Laotian problem; and 2) provide a basis for assessing the soundness of the US plan to promote him to the premiership (see item 28 October 60). The Secretary listed recent developments that indicated Souvanna's failure to stem the growing influence of the Pathet Lao in the government: 1) the formation on 31 October of the National Neutrality and Unity Committee with Kong Le as an officer; 2) the "coordination and liaison" with the Pathet Lao on the part of Colonel Kouprasith (a FAL Battalion Commander) in his maneuver to gain control of the forces in the Paksone-Pah Cadinh area; and 3) the recent promotion of several NLHX sympathizers to responsible offices in the royal government.

The Secretary believed that the non-Communist element who feared Souvanna's orientation toward the Pathet Lao would gravitate to Phoui, thereby, Pathet Lao-NLHX influence would be arrested and reversed. The Secretary also reminded the Ambassadors that Phoui's attitude toward Laotian neutrality, and willingness to work with Phoumi, made him most acceptable to the US.
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 486, 4 Nov 60; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 788, 3 Nov 60.

5 Nov

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Assistant Secretary of State outlined the US position on the presence of UN representatives in Laos. The US had supported the existence of UN economic and technical advisors in Laos because they served as a deterrent to Communist external aggression and discouraged Communist assistance to internal insurgency. Moreover, UN economic and technical aid assisted in developing Laos as a unified nation (an expressed objective of the US (see item 23 November 60). However, the US had rejected the presence of UN military observers in Laos because it would require action by the Security Council. The US believed any appeal to the Council by Laos at this time, in the absence of any clear-cut case of Communist intervention, "could be most unfortunate" and would lead to an ill-timed general discussion in the UN of the Lao situation. Fearing a direct approach to the Security Council by Souvanna, the Assistant Secretary ordered the Ambassador to report to the Department of State any instructions sent by the UN Secretary General to his representative in Laos in reply to Souvanna's request for military observers.

(S) Msg, AsstSecState to Vientiane, 491, 5 Nov 60.

7 Nov

In a memorandum to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Chairman, JCS, stated his views on the feasibility of using [redacted] officers as advisors to Laotian Battalions. The [redacted] unit that might provide advisors was the [redacted]. If the officers in this unit, said the Chairman, were assigned as advisors to the Laotian Army, even at the rate of one per battalion, in all but two cases the advisors would be equal or lower in rank than the Battalion Commanders; it was virtually certain that Laotian Battalion Commanders would not cooperate fully.

with a junior [redacted] officer. On the other hand, experience indicated that Southeast Asia indigenous forces regard US officers in a better light. The Chairman recommended, therefore, that, in lieu of arranging for the assignment of [redacted] officers to the Laotian Army, steps be taken to arrange for the assignment of US advisors at the battalion level. (See item 2 December 60.)

(TS) JCS 1992/870, 8 Nov 60, JMF 9155 2/9105
(12 Aug 60).

8 Nov

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown reviewed the recent political developments in Laos and made several recommendations to effect a unification of the non-Communist elements. The Ambassador viewed the appearance of Phoui as a possible bridge between Souvanna and Phoumi, and together with the decision of Souvanna and the Assembly to send a delegation to negotiate with the Savannakhet leaders, as the last chance for a negotiated settlement. He recommended that the US: 1) urge Souvanna and his Assembly delegates to propose reasonable conditions for national unification and be willing to accept reasonable proposals from Savannakhet, 2) bring similar pressure to bear on Phoumi and urge him to dissolve his committee and reach a compromise with Souvanna in the formation of a new government; 3) emphasize to Phoui that while the US still regarded him as an "instrument to bring about a Lao solution," he must not disrupt the activities being initiated between Souvanna and Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 889, 8 Nov 60.

9 Nov

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Secretary of State, after again reviewing the growing influence of the Pathet Lao in the Royal Laotian Government (see item 4 November 60), expounded on the existing political and military situation in Laos and on US plans for solving the present crisis. Among his lengthy observations on the existing political and military situation in Laos the Secretary mentioned: 1) the non-Communist element in Vientiane wielded little power; in fact, power in the capital could be determined only by force of arms; 2) appointment of Champa, an opportunist who often voted with the NLHX, as governor of Sam Neua negated US hopes for a new firmness in Souvanna's attitude toward the leftists; 3) Kouprasith, the leader of the pro-Souvanna military group, had worked in liaison with the Pathet Lao and collaborated actively with them; 4) the Pathet Lao remained the most significant single military element in the country; in fact, the leftist military elements were now in "key positions and evidently had complete freedom of action and access to supplies;" and 5) Ouane's presence in Luang Prabang had resulted in confusion among military leaders there, and in a weakening in their resolve to resist the Pathet Lao.

The Secretary outlined the latest US plan: to induce a quorum of the Assembly to meet freely in Luang Prabang to form a new government (see item 28 October 60). Even though this might simply result in a reshuffling of the cabinet and retention of Souvanna as Premier, it could strengthen the anti-Pathet Lao forces. The Secretary expressed the hope that Phoui might still be appointed Premier, but admitted this seemed more remote now. And although Phoumi might be responsible for the

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present political impasse among the non-Communist elements, the Secretary believed him to be an essential anti-Communist counterweight to Souvanna's leftist tendencies. Furthermore, to exert the kind of pressure needed to curb Phoumi would have the gravest repercussions among the anti-Communist nations of Southeast Asia.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 498, 9 Nov 60

10 Nov

The Secretary of State ordered Ambassador Brown to proceed with the implementation of the recently approved US plan to replace Souvanna with Phoui (see item 9 November 60). He ordered the Ambassador to approach the three major parties separately as follows:

1) Phoui should be informed that the US favored his having a free hand in executing his plan for convening a conference of the major non-Communist elements and the US should support him in any reasonable proposal he might make. The development of circumstances leading to his elevation to premiership, however, "should be a purely Lao movement toward Phoui." The part played by the US should be revealed as little as possible.

2) To Souvanna, the Ambassador should express US concern over possible inclusion of NLHX in the cabinet, a move that the US considered "disastrous." He might also express to Souvanna the deep concern of the US over the apparent united front nature of the recently formed Committee of Neutrality since, as proved in other countries, this usually resulted in complete Communist domination.

3) The Ambassador should inform Phoumi that it would be to his advantage to participate in Phoui's discussions. While not revealing to him the US support of Phoui, Corcoran (US official at Savannakhet) could tell Phoumi that the US was inalterably opposed to the inclusion of the NLHX in the government and suggest that if he and Boun Oum made constructive proposals to Assembly delegates, the delegates might be influenced in their favor.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 501, 10 Nov 60.

10 Nov

The Secretary of State informed the US Ambassador in Laos that, since it was now almost certain that continuation of Souvanna as Prime Minister would result in the loss of Laos to the West and a disastrous disillusionment of Thailand and Vietnam, the US was determined to establish a new Laotian Government without Souvanna. To achieve this, the Secretary indicated, the US risked a "reaction" by the Pathet Lao backed by international Communism, and trouble with its allies France and the UK. However, it had come to the reluctant conclusion that "risks should be faced now rather than later when they might have to be faced under yet less favorable circumstances." The Secretary still hoped the change in government might be accomplished through the efforts of Phoui "along the lines" of previous US plans (see item 28 October 60). The Secretary stated, however, that the US was determined to proceed with whatever courses would be open to it if plans involving Phoui should fail.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 502, 10 Nov 60.

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11 Nov

Following the defection of the capital garrison under Major Baunpheun Isixiengmay to the Rightist camp, the royal capital of Luang Prabang fell to the Phoumi faction in a bloodless coup.

On the same day in a message to CINCPAC, the JCS warned of a possible airborne counterattack by Kong Le against Luang Prabang, and ordered CINCPAC to watch developments closely with a view to taking any feasible action to deny to Kong Le resources in aircraft and POL. (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 11 Nov 60, DA-OUT 985720, JCS Secretariat; NYT, 12 Nov 60, 1; AP, 11 Nov 60.

14 Nov

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna planned to attack Luang Prabang. Since Phoumi had not responded to his offer for negotiation (see item 8 November 60) and continued to conspire against the Royal Laotian Government, Souvanna declared he had no alternative but to use force to establish the legal government's authority in the royal capital. He informed Ambassador Brown that he would not collaborate with the Pathet Lao in this operation, but at the same time, he would be unable to prevent the Pathet Lao from attacking Phoumi elsewhere. Souvanna also informed the Ambassador that in view of Phoumi's intransigence, the Premier might have to reconsider the government's policy on US aid to Phoumi.

The Ambassador pointed out to the Secretary that if Souvanna carried out his threat to attack, it would place the US in the position of openly supporting a rebel force against the legal government.
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 925, 14 Nov 60.

16 Nov

Ambassador Brown submitted several recommendations to the Secretary of State regarding US aid to Laos. The Ambassador urged that: 1) the US should continue to oppose an attack by Phoumi on Vientiane (unless the Pathet Lao initiated an offensive against that city), and should refuse to support him in any action against Vientiane or Luang Prabang, such as an airlift for his troops, unless and until the King established a new government favored by the US; 2) if requested, the US should provide equipment and supplies for the anti-Pathet Lao forces under Kouprasith's personal control, with adequate supervision by the PEO; and 3) in view of the weak position of Phoumi, the "lukewarm" reaction of Phoumi to a national coalition of anti-Communists, and the "spinelessness" of the King, the US should "sit tight" in Laos, at least until the attitudes of Ouane and Kouprasith were clarified.
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 935, 16 Nov 60.

16 Nov

The 13th Conference of SEATO military advisors met in Bangkok to agree on a revision of defense plans to meet Communist internal threats in the treaty area. The representative of Thailand, who had been urging SEATO action in Laos since the 9 August coup, contended that SEATO's present defense plans were based on "a pro-Western Laos and therefore are now outmoded." He admitted that his government's faith in the alliance had been "shaken a lot" by recent events in Laos and that it was "watching the attitude adopted by SEATO in the immediate future." The US representative, Admiral

Felt (CINCPAC), assured the conference that US forces in the Pacific "stand ready to come to the aid of the alliance and will fight to protect the independence of the free men in Asia." (See item 12 December 60.)
AP, 17, 18 Nov 60; Deadline Data.

16 Nov

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that it appeared clearly unlikely that the King would convene a three-party conference in Luang Prabang as advocated by Phoui and the US (see item 9 November 60). Moreover, the Ambassador interpreted the current trend in Laos as being strongly in favor of a Phoumi government. He also reported that military action at this time was improbable since Souvanna had sent Ouane (lately replaced as Commander in Chief by the King) to Savannakhet to attempt further negotiations with Phoumi. For his part, Phoumi had assured the US that he was not going to attack Vientiane at the present time. The Ambassador also indicated that the two major uncertainties in the Laotian situation were the loyalties of Ouane and Kouprasith.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 935, 16 Nov 60.

17 Nov

General Ouane Rathikone, the former commander of the FAL, announced his defection to the rightist regime of General Phoumi Nosavan. Premier Souvanna placed the blame for these defections on US moral and military support of Phoumi.

AP, 17 Nov 60; NYT, 20 Nov 60.

18 Nov

The Royal Laotian Government issued a communique announcing the signing of a preliminary agreement with the Pathet Lao calling for: 1) the immediate arrangement of a cease-fire between the Pathet Lao and Royal Government forces; 2) the formation of a government of national unity that would include representatives of the NLHX as well as of the Phoumi group. The communique also announced that the Royal Government intended to accept aid from China and North Vietnam, to dispatch good will missions to these countries for the exchange of economic and cultural relations, and to undertake "good neighborly relations with Peoples of China."

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 950, 18 Nov 60,
NYT, 19 Nov 60, 1.

19 Nov

Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Department of State a French diplomatic representative's flat admission that France could see as a solution in Laos only a national union government, including NLHX. The French saw no reason for the removal of Souvanna; but if this eventuality should occur, the French would reject Phoui as a successor, and put forward as their candidate Pheng Phongsavan.

(S) Vientiane to SecState, 955, 19 Nov 60.

21 Nov

After consultation with the Department of State, the JCS ordered CINCPAC to remove all restraints on military operations by Phoumi in the event government troops attacked Luang Prabang, and to support him if he proved willing to fight. The JCS also ordered CINCPAC to furnish all necessary CAT aircraft for Phoumi's operations.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 21 Nov 60, DA-OUT 986140, JCS Secretariat.

~~TOP SECRET~~

21 Nov

Premier Souvanna Phouma informed Ambassador Brown that as a result of his successful negotiations with the Pathet Lao (see item 18 November 60), he was requesting the King to assemble in Luang Prabang, under a guarantee of safe conduct, representatives of the Phoumi faction, the Pathet Lao, and the Royal Government in order to form a national unity government. Although Souphanouvong (leader of the Pathet Lao) had refused to collaborate with Phoumi and Boun Oum personally, Souvanna assured the Ambassador that a place would be found in the new government for Phoumi.

In the same conversation with the Ambassador, the Premier defended his policy of accepting aid from China and North Vietnam: "it was a consistent policy of the government that it would accept aid from any source if offered without strings." He admitted, however, that this did not imply diplomatic relations with either country. He defined his "good neighbor relations with China" as simply border trade and official contacts to handle border incidents. The Premier also claimed that the northeast city of Sam Neua had been returned to the control of his government by the Pathet Lao, but admitted that he had left Pathet Lao officials in charge.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 968, 21 Nov 60.

23 Nov

In a formal note delivered to Ambassador Brown, the Royal Laotian Government requested the immediate cessation of all US aid to the rebel forces of General Phoumi Nosavan. The note declared the existing US policy of supporting the Phoumi rebellion contrary to the objectives of the three power ministerial meeting of 23 September (see item), which affirmed the legality of the Souvanna government and pledged the preservation of Laotian territorial unity. The note charged that the US aid to Phoumi encouraged the rebellion and thus endangered Laotian unity.

(C) Vientiane to State, 973, 23 Nov 60.

23 Nov

In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC argued that at least one Phoumi military victory was required as a pre-condition to any acceptable political solution of the Laotian problem. Without such a victory, he warned, the political solution sought by the US was doomed to failure because Souvanna and Souphanouvong could outmaneuver any of the anti-Communist leaders in their discussions scheduled to take place before the King (see item 21 November 60). Moreover, the restrictions placed on Phoumi's military operations by the US State Department could assure Souvanna a military as well as a political victory at Luang Prabang. To avoid this "king-sized booby trap for the anti-Communist forces," CINCPAC urged that the US: 1) remove all restrictions placed on Phoumi's forces so that Souvanna could not proceed with impunity in his political and military maneuvering, 2) as an absolute minimum, allow Phoumi to initiate attacks in support of his forces in Luang Prabang; and 3) continue to stall on Souvanna's request for cessation of US support to Phoumi. (See item 2 December 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 23 Nov 60, 498, JCS Secretariat.

~~TOP SECRET~~
24 Nov

At the request of Souvanna Phouma, a US mission flew to Luang Prabang to persuade the King to call a conference of all national elements as suggested by the Premier. (See item 21 November 60.)
NYT, 25 Nov 60, 6.

25 Nov

The Associated Press reported that Premier Souvanna Phouma had moved his forces from Vientiane to a position 65 miles south of Luang Prabang, but was withholding orders to attack until a decision was made by the King concerning the proposed meeting of all national elements. (See items 14 and 21 December 60.)
AP, 25 Nov 60.

26 Nov

The Secretary of State transmitted to Ambassador Brown the US reply to the Royal Laotian Government's note of 22 November (see item), for delivery to the Prime Minister on 28 November. The note reaffirmed the US desire to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of Laos and characterized US aid to Laos since 1957 as an effort to insure this objective. It defended its support of Phoumi by referring to the agreement between Ambassador Brown and Souvanna Phouma on 19 October (see item) which provided that the US could furnish aid directly to regions outside Vientiane. Moreover, the note requested a clarification of the terms "rebels" and "all aid" mentioned in the Laotian note. (If the term "rebel" was meant to be interpreted in its broadest sense, the note pointed out, US aid would be denied to four-fifths of the kingdom. If this occurred, the note asked, how could national reconciliation be brought about?)

The Ambassador was also instructed to inform Souvanna orally that: 1) in recent informal meetings the foreign ministers of the US, UK, and France had discussed the Laotian problem and had agreed on common objectives in their policy toward that nation; 2) contrary to Souvanna's claim, the denial of US aid to the Savannakhet forces would have resulted in the establishment of a revolutionary government many months ago; and 3) the civil war Souvanna charged the US with inciting in Laos was being prevented at this time only through the efforts of the US, which was helping "patriotic Lao find a basis of agreement."

In a covering message to Ambassador Brown the Secretary of State admitted that the US faced a dilemma: the Laotian note could not be disregarded, but at the same time the US could not abandon the anti-Communist forces in Laos. The US note represented a temporizing action until the removal of Souvanna could be effected. The Secretary also promised to inform the UK, France, and Australia, in order to enlist their aid in warning Souvanna of the dangers inherent in his present policy. (See item 26 November 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 557, 26 Nov 60.

26 Nov

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown of the results of US meetings with UK, French and Australian representatives concerning US-Laotian exchange of notes (see items 23 and 26 November 60). The US had asked its allies to use their good offices with Souvanna to change his present course of action,

stressing Souvanna's isolation (he had only nominal control of Vientiane), and his increasing dependence on the Pathet Lao internally and on Communist aid internationally. The US had claimed that its efforts had so far prevented civil war, the secession of the of the Savannakhet leadership, and the establishment of a revolutionary government. The US also had warned of the far reaching consequences to Laos and all South-east Asia if Souvanna persisted in his request that the US cut off all aid to four-fifths of Laos.

In reply to the US request: 1) France had indicated that it still supported Souvanna as the only hope of a peaceful settlement of the Laotian problem, 2) Australia had mentioned its continued opposition to Phoumi who, it believed, should be supporting Souvanna, and 3) the UK had agreed to influence Souvanna to call off his attack on Luang Prabang, but had refused to use its influence to alter his other actions.

(S) Msg. SecState to Vientiane et al, 558, 26 Nov 60.

26 Nov

It was reported that King Savang Vathana rejected the conference proposed by Souvanna, consisting of all Laotian political elements (see items 21 and 24 November 60).

Souvanna's troops were marching on the royal capital but many were defecting to Phoumi's rebels.
NYT, 27 Nov 60, 10.

26 Nov

The Royal Laotian Government lodged a formal protest with Thailand over the continued blockade of the Lao kingdom (see item 26 October 60). The Government claimed that the Thai blockade was "throttling the economy of Vientiane and other areas."
AP, 26 Nov 60

28 Nov

The French Charge at Washington delivered his government's reply to the Department of State's request for its good offices in persuading Souvanna to resign (see item 26 November 60). The French declined the US request.

While the French were not enthusiastic about Souvanna's recent pro-Communist actions (see item 9 November 60), they disagreed with the US assessment of Phoumi's strength. Rejecting the US contention that Phoumi commands the allegiance of four-fifths of Laos, the French submitted that the majority of Laotians were profoundly neutralist, and only a few officers and officials were controlled by Phoumi. Moreover, the French believed Souvanna's recent pro-Communist bent ascribable to the sealing off of other courses by Savannakhet's belligerence.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 562, 29 Nov 60.

30 Nov

In a speech before the lower house of parliament, Prime Minister Nehru reaffirmed his government's support of Souvanna Phouma and declared that the only way to save Laos would be to exclude the influence of the major powers, who were introducing the cold war into Southeast Asia.

(U) New Delhi to SecState, G-307. 30 NOV 60.

~~TOP SECRET~~
30 Nov

~~TOP SECRET~~
In a message to the JCS CINCPAC warned that the meeting of the Lao assembly in Luang Prabang which the US had been supporting (see item 9 November 60), might result in a political stalemate with Souvanna pressing for a coalition government and the Phoumi group demanding the ouster of the Souvanna government. While CINCPAC preferred "an adequate political solution to a military contest," he believed that a political stalemate would be a prelude to renewed military action, and warned that, "our friends in Laos must be in a strong military posture in order to prevail."

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 30 Nov 60, 6828/TAE/EM, JCS Secretariat.

30 Nov

Ambassador Brown reported a conversation with Souvanna concerning the US note of 28 November (see item 26 November 60), during which Souvanna replied to that note's requests for clarification of the terms "all aid" and "rebels." The "aid" which Souvanna opposed was the supplying of arms and munitions to forces which might turn these supplies against his regime. Souvanna obviously included Phoumi in this category of potential insurrectionists against his regime; while he did not classify Phoumi as "rebel," Souvanna pointedly omitted Savannakhet when he defined "loyal" areas. The only areas which Souvanna considered loyal were Phong Saly, Sam Neua, and Vientiane.

(S) Vientiane to SecState, 1024, 30 Nov 60.

1 Dec

At a meeting in Washington between British and French representatives and Under Secretary of State Merchant it was concluded that the most complete and pressing disparity between these powers' positions was their complete disagreement concerning the feasibility of Pathet Lao representation in any coalition cabinet.

During the discussion, Under Secretary Merchant indicated that the US assessment of the military situation was that the anti-Communist forces were now "substantially superior" in capability and morale than in previous months.

(S) SecState to Vientiane, 582, 2 Dec 60.

2 Dec

The JCS ordered CINCPAC to restrict Phoumi's military operations until further notice. CINCPAC could continue, however, the cautious use of CAT aircraft to supply Luang Prabang "as unobtrusively as possible." The Departments of State and Defense had concurred that Phoumi should defend and consolidate any positions he occupied north of the Nam Ca Dinh River and should clear the enemy from positions south of the river. The JCS informed CINCPAC, however, that should the RLG/PL forces attack Luang Prabang, the above restrictions on Phoumi should be immediately rescinded. (See item 23 November 60.)

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA 936730, 2 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

2 Dec

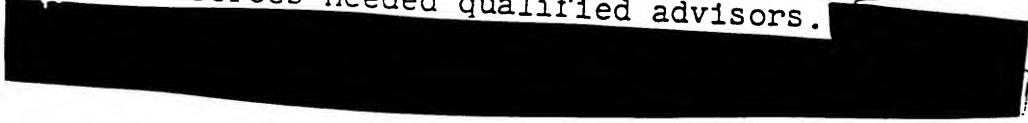
In response to the 7 November memorandum of the Chairman, JCS (see item), the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs stated that although he agreed with the objective of making Laotian battalions fully effective, he did not think the Chairman's proposal concerning the assignment of US advisors to the battalions was "practicable at this time." The Under Secretary's principal reasons for his negative reply were as follows:

1) Laotian leaders could be expected to be unreceptive to the proposal.

2) The assignment of US personnel to combat units whose legal status was equivocal presented an unacceptable risk; moreover, the "legal government" would have strong grounds for accusing the US of intervention; and the capture or killing of US personnel under these circumstances would have "most serious international consequences, not the least of which would be to offer the Vietminh a ready excuse to intervene militarily."

3) No action like that proposed by the Chairman should be taken until "there is a new unified government with which we can work across the board and throughout the country"; even then there would remain the problem of the Geneva Agreement which prohibited the entry of foreign military personnel into Laos except as specified (see Introduction).

Nevertheless, said the Under Secretary, the State Department shared the Chairman's view that Phoumi's forces needed qualified advisors.



(TS) Memo, UnderSecState for Pol Aff to CJCS,
"Advisors for Battalions of the Lao Army," 2 Dec 60,
JMF 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

3 Dec

Ambassador Brown relayed to the Secretary of State the substance of a conversation with Souvanna in which Souvanna claimed that the mission of Somsanith to Savannakhet to persuade Phoumi to attend a conference in Luang Prabang (see item 21 November 60), had produced encouraging results. Phoumi ostensibly had agreed that a national unity government including NLHX was necessary and that strict neutrality must be the position of such a government. A Savannakhet delegation had been invited to Vientiane for further negotiations.

(S) Vientiane to SecState, 1049, 3 Dec 60.

4 Dec

CINCPAC again advocated to the JCS that restrictions on Phoumi's actions be raised. He pointed out that Souvanna's latest maneuver, substituting a meeting of the Assembly in Vientiane for the one planned in Luang Prabang, placed the Assembly under Kong Le's guns and insured an outcome favorable to Souvanna. He warned that the restriction of Phoumi gave Souvanna a significant advantage. In CINCPAC's view, Ambassador Brown should protest Souvanna's decision to convene the Assembly in Vientiane; increased pressure by Phoumi would lend obvious support to the Ambassador's protestations, and in this manner Souvanna might be foiled in his attempt to constitute a government which would include NLHX.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA-IN 2311, 4 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

6 Dec

Ambassador Brown transmitted to the State Department the Royal Laotian Government's official reply to the US note of 28 November (see item 26 November). After appropriate expressions of gratitude, the Laotian Government nonetheless declared that:

. . . in view of the present domestic situation that has developed in the Kingdom since the month of November, 1960, [US aid] could not be continued without serious danger unless it were readapted to the situation.

While financial, economic, technical, and medical aid were welcomed for all of Laos, the Laotian Government demanded that military aid be restricted to "troops that remain loyal to the legal government" (see item 30 November).

On the same day, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to reply orally to Souvanna's note. The Ambassador was ordered to inform Souvanna that:

1. No arms or ammunition had been brought into Laos since Souvanna's oral explanation to Ambassador Brown on 30 November 60 (see item).

2. Since the US considered Phoumi an essential deterrent to a Pathet Lao and Viet Minh takeover in Laos, it requested assurances that no "procedural obstacles" would be interposed by the Royal Laotian Government to the supply of food, clothing, pay, medicine, and gasoline to the Savannakhet forces. Moreover, any moderating US influence upon Phoumi was contingent upon continued US assistance, and if denied this assistance, Phoumi might resort to desperate action leading to civil war.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1064, 6 Dec 60; SecState to Vientiane, 595, 6 Dec 60.

7 Dec

Colonel Kouprasith informed the US Army Attache in Vientiane that a coup d'etat would commence in Vientiane in the early morning of 8 December. Kouprasith also revealed that General Phoumi was being kept informed of all developments, and that a force air-lifted from Savannakhet was expected to participate. (See item 8 December 60.)

(S) Msg, CSA to JCS, unnumbered, 7 Dec 60, CJCS 091 (Laos,

7 Dec

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Phoumi's forces were advancing towards Vientiane, and that plans for a Phoumi coup were well advanced within Vientiane. That the Government forces were aware of the imminence of attack was manifested by intensive security precautions.

The successful "exfiltration" of a quorum of assembly members from Vientiane (see item 9 November 60) thus was becoming increasingly impracticable. The military developments were diminishing chances for an early favorable political solution. Ambassador Brown foresaw the predicament of two existing and distinct governments in Laos--one supported by a lonely US, the other supported by "everybody else."

Ambassador Brown nonetheless agreed that the present course of a Phoumi advance together with an engineered coup was the best of the several unsatisfactory alternatives.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1081, 7 Dec 60.

8 Dec

In the morning hours, an uprising, prearranged by Phoumi and Colonel Kouprasith, endeavored to seize control of Vientiane. Kouprasith issued a statement pledging support to Souvanna's brand of neutralism.

Souvanna, interpreting the coup as support for his regime, cooperated by ordering the restriction, under guard, of leftist elements within Vientiane who were opposing his negotiations with Phoumi. In a related move, Souvanna also stripped Kong Le of his military power.

(S) DIB, 8 Dec 60, J-2 Files; NYT, 9 Dec 60, 1.

8 Dec

The Chief of Staff, Army, recommended to the Chairman, JCS, that the Chairman inform the Under Secretary of State that it was the considered opinion of the JCS that Winthrop Brown should be immediately replaced as Ambassador to Laos. The Chief of Staff, Army, had become increasingly disturbed by the "negative and

defeatist attitude" of the Ambassador who had "consistently negated or hindered the carrying out of US policy in Laos."
(S) CSAM 430-60, 8 Dec 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

8 Dec

The Chief, PEO, informed CINCPAC that the US Military Liaison Advisor to Phoumi, warning that the rate of Phoumi's buildup at Vientiane was dangerously slow and that the risk of a successful PL reaction to the pro-Phoumi uprising was increased thereby, had requested Ambassador Brown's permission to use CAT aircraft for the airlift of Phoumi's troops. Ambassador Brown had vetoed the request.

The Chief, PEO, informed CINCPAC that he concurred in Ambassador Brown's decision; the Chief, PEO, agreed that the request "did not meet the criteria [set by] JCS directives."

The Secretary of State approved Ambassador Brown's veto of CAT participation in Phoumi's troop lift into the Vientiane area. Since Phoumi's success depended upon deployment with maximum speed, however, he authorized Brown to use CAT aircraft "where you feel acceptance of additional political risk [was] justified by chances of achieving the result we desire."

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 603, 8 Dec 60;
(S) Msg, CHPEO, Laos to CINCPAC, 9867, 8 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

9 Dec

Kong Le, undeceived by Kouprasith's stratagem of neutral pronouncements (see item 8 December 60), directed a counter-coup that seized control of major portions of Vientiane. Most significantly, Kong Le was in firm command of the Vientiane airfield, and thus in a position to receive massive resupply by Soviet airlift.

Souvanna, now utterly powerless, fled the country during the evening, while Vientiane awaited the approach of Pathet Lao reinforcements for Kong Le from the north and Phoumi columns from the east and west.

(TS) Vientiane to SecState, 1102, 9 Dec 60;
(U) Vientiane to SecState, 1097, 9 Dec 60; NYT, 10 Dec 60, 1.

11 Dec

Quinim Polsena, pro-Communist Minister of Information in Souvanna's disbanded cabinet, announced his assumption of the premiership. Quinim derived his support from Kong Le's pro-Pathet Lao forces.
NYT, 12 Dec 60, 1.

11 Dec

The Secretary of State suggested that the US Representative call a special session of the SEATO Council of Representatives to consult on new threats to the Treaty area caused by developments in Laos. The US hoped to extract a statement from the SEATO Council that would put the Communists on notice of SEATO vigilance and provide reassurance to US allies and others in the Treaty area.

At the request of the US Representatives, a meeting of the SEATO Council was held in Bangkok on 15 December 60.

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 835, 11 Dec 60;
NYT, 16 Dec 60, 1.

12 Dec

In a lengthy cable Ambassador Brown presented the Secretary of State with a list of possible charges that might be brought against US actions in Laos and a corresponding list of detailed answers that might be used to refute these charges.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1143, 13 Dec 60.

12 Dec

The US Ambassador to Cambodia, William C. Trimble, reported that Cambodia, in transmissions to the UN Secretary-General, was continuing to amplify its proposal for a "neutral belt" comprising Cambodia and Laos (see item 29 September 60). Amplification of the suggestion was being provided to the Secretariat General, UN, for discussion purposes.

Cambodia considered that no foreign bases should exist in either country and both countries should proclaim their refusal to participate in any alliance. Bloc and Western nations then should renounce all forms of subversion, open and clandestine. Finally, a UN commission of three authentic neutrals--as distinguished from representatives of the three world groupings--should police this settlement.

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 6444 [sic], 12 Dec 60.

12 Dec

The Laotian National Assembly, in session at Savannakhet, voted to dissolve the Souvanna Government (to which Quinim had claimed succession--see item 11 December 60); and, under powers conferred by the King in Royal Ordinance 283, the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet formed a Provisional Government of Laos.

On 13 December information reached Vientiane that King Savang Vathana had withdrawn his support from Quinim. Concurrently, Boun Oum was heading a delegation from Savannakhet to Luang Prabang that expected to receive the King's approval for the formation of a permanent pro-Western government.

Quinim's reply to reports of the King's decision was that he considered the King to be "under duress," and that he himself was under no obligation to obey.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, unnumbered, 21 Dec 60; (U) Vientiane to SecState, DA-IN 842248, 13 Dec 60; NYT, 13 Dec 60, 12; 14 Dec 60, 19.

12-13 Dec

Ambassador Trimble reported to the Secretary of State the views of Souvanna upon his status vis-a-vis the Laotian Government. Souvanna insisted that he and his cabinet were still the legal government, having merely temporarily vested power in the general staff. Since his government as a whole thus had turned over the reins to the army, Souvanna considered Quinim's use of cabinet rank as the basis for assuming power to be illegal.

Ambassador Trimble urged upon the Department of State the necessity of Souvanna's removal from Phnom Penh before Cambodian Premier Sinhanouk's return from a Bloc tour. Trimble considered that these two men, if together, would encourage each other in anti-Western activities.

Trimble considered that Souvanna's removal to Luang Prabang might be effected if the King convoked the assembly and guaranteed Souvanna's personal safety. On 13 December the Department of State, although considering such a move by the King unlikely, instructed Ambassador Brown to extract similar assurances of safety from Phoumi. The Department of State accepted Trimble's evaluation of the peril of Sinhanouk's influence upon Souvanna and reasoned further that Souvanna, if in Luang Prabang, would be effectively isolated from both Communist diplomats and the world press.

Ambassador Trimble also relayed to the Secretary of State on 13 December the comment by the Secretary General of the Cambodian Foreign Ministry that Cambodia by no means was eager to be an active base of operations for the fleeing Souvanna clique.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 633 13 Dec 60;
(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 660, 12 Dec 60, and 699, 13 Dec 60.

13 Dec

In a note delivered to the US Ambassador the Soviet Government charged the US with a "glaring violation" of Article 12 of the Geneva Conference Declaration of 1954. In support of its charge, the USSR outlined in considerable detail "US intervention in the internal affairs of Laos" by its overt support of the forces in rebellion against the legal government of Laos. The note placed on the US all responsibility for the consequences "which can arise as a result of the aggressive actions of the United States and some of its allies in the SEATO military bloc."

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIX (2 Jan 61), 16-17.

14 Dec

The Laotian Desk Officer of British Foreign Office registered a British evaluation of the Pathet Lao danger and of the Phoumi leadership with a US Embassy official. The British considered that the Pathet Lao could not be defeated militarily, but could be controlled as a political party. Moreover, the British official spoke of the Savannakhet Cabinet as "a disreputable crew."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2563, 15 Dec 60.

14 Dec

The Department of State informed Under Secretary Merchant in Paris that the US had decided not to prefer charges before the Security Council against the Soviet Union for its airlift in Laos. The Department believed the psychological advantage of initiating charges would be outweighed by the likely outcome before the Council where both the US and USSR would receive condemnation for their actions. Moreover, in view of UK and French disenchantment with the present US position, the US could not expect a propaganda victory in the Council. The Department admitted, however, that this did not preclude a US charge being made before the Council should the situation change, or should it become clear that the Soviets or others intended to request a Council meeting on Laos. Meanwhile, the Department requested comments upon the alternative course: that the Laotian Ambassador circulate a note to all UN members calling their attention to Soviet intervention in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, TOSEC 7, 14 Dec 60.

~~TOP SECRET~~

14 Dec Prime Minister Nehru suggested to the co-chairman (the UK and the USSR) of the Geneva Conference that the ICC should be reconvened in Laos. (See items 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, and 28 December 60.)
(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1259, 15 Dec 60; AP, 14 Dec 60.

14 Dec The JCS notified CINCPAC of the following modifications in Ambassador Brown's instructions: 1) All restrictions were removed on the use of CAT aircraft in support of the Phoumi forces; 2) The King or his Government were to be encouraged to request US aid in any area required; and 3) the Chief, FEO, was to deal directly with Phoumi concerning the conduct of military operations.
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 987223, 14 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

15 Dec Ambassador Trimble forwarded to the Secretary of State the text of Souvanna's statement of his self-conceived position in Laotian politics (see item 12 December 60).

"The government I head has not resigned. I have merely entrusted the General Staff with the Direction of the country temporarily. . . .

". . . the king declared that my government fell on December 9 and entrusted the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet temporarily with governmental powers. . . . Even though the composition of the new cabinet has received royal sanction, we consider it illegal, since it was not established in accordance with constitutional procedures."

The Ambassador reported that Souvanna insisted he was still the head of the government and was unwilling to consider resigning as a patriotic or humanitarian gesture. Souvanna did indicate, however, that he would be willing to serve in a new cabinet "even in a minor capacity such as Secretary of State," but was still convinced that the government must include NLHX representatives.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 580 and 688, 15 Dec 60.

15-16 Dec The JCS informed CINCPAC that "executive decisions," as communicated to the CNO, and others, by the President's Military Aide Brigadier General Goodpaster, "permit[ted]" the following actions to be taken in Laos, "if necessary and requested by Laos":

a. Furnishing a field hospital.

b. Use of Thai aircraft for civil transport (including movement of hospital) or transport of military supplies.

c. Use of United States aircraft to transport either civilian or military supplies.

In addition, the JCS informed CINCPAC that "favorable response" could be expected if the RLG requested the use of Thai aircraft for reconnaissance over Laos.

On the following day, CINCPAC replied to the JCS that the RTAF had only a limited and unreliable capability for photo reconnaissance. CINCPAC considered it preferable

that the Laotians request the US to provide "expert" photo reconnaissance.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987232, 15 Dec 60;

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160233Z Dec 60.

16 Dec British and French representatives in Washington reported to the Department of State that their respective representatives in Phnom Penh were both urging Souvanna to reject the Souphanouvong invitation to go to Sam Neua, the headquarters of the Pathet Lao.

(C) Msg, SecState to London, 3291, 19 Dec 60.

16 Dec Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the Thai Foreign Minister had relayed to the Ambassador the results of Thai aerial reconnaissance at Vientiane. A flight in which Prime Minister Sarit participated observed that the Vientiane airfield had not been damaged by shell fire, as Phoumi claimed. The Thai Foreign Minister reported this observation as corroboration of the Thai contention that Phoumi's artillery was incompetent. More generally, Ambassador Johnson reported that the Thais considered Phoumi undiscerning, complacent, and inexplicably reluctant to accept Thai assistance.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1023, 17 Dec 60.

16 Dec Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Secretary of State a note from Boun Oum declaring the formation under Boun Oum of a new and royally approved government. In the same note Boun Oum requested emergency aid for the population of Vientiane and military and economic assistance for the new regime.

(U) Vientiane to SecState, unnumbered, 16 Dec 60.

16 Dec In a letter to the JCS, CINCPAC recommended that action "be initiated to reach an agreed United States position on a bilateral MAAG agreement for negotiation with Laos upon formation of a stable government in that country." The Chief, PEO, said CINCPAC, had been seriously handicapped in carrying out his mission by the lack of a bilateral agreement. Further, the fact that PEO personnel performed their duties as civilians had affected adversely PEO's efforts, and resulted in the re-establishment of French influence in Vientiane.

Going on, CINCPAC stated that, "heretofore," political considerations had precluded the establishment of a regular MAAG under the existing agreement among the US, France, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Recent events suggested, however, that to assure the resolution of the chaotic conditions existing in Laos in a manner consonant with US objectives, it was essential that "an orthodox and overt MAAG be established as soon as possible" (see item 23 December 60).

CINCPAC's letter enclosed a draft proposed Bilateral MAAG Agreement with Laos.

On the same day CINCPAC advanced, by cable, additional reasons for a MAAG in Laos. Phoumi was strongly in favor of an orthodox MAAG for Laos, and had been inpatient with US deference to the French position in FAL administration, training, and operations. The removal of French interference would both please Phoumi and facilitate the achievement of US military objectives in Laos.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 2583, 15 Dec 60; (S) JCS 1992/889, 24 Dec 60, both in JMF 9155.2/4060 (16 Dec 60).

16 Dec The JCS, after consulting CINCPAC, recommended to the Secretary of Defense that [REDACTED] four H-34 type helicopters, to be used in Laos by Air America Inc., be approved, and instructions issued for the Navy Department to airlift four Marine helicopters from Okinawa to Bangkok.

(On the same day the JCS informed CINCPAC that the Navy Department had been directed to take the necessary action and ordered CINCPAC to arrange for the airlift of the helicopters.)

(TS) JCSM-570-60, derived from JCS 1992/880, 16 Dec 60; (TS) JCS to CINCPAC, 987420, 16 Dec 60, both in JMF 9155.2/9105 (15 Dec 60).

16-17 Dec After three days of battle, Phoumi's forces expelled Kong Le's troops from Vientiane. The Phoumi troops had penetrated Vientiane on 13 December, the main body having marched from Paksane to join the Kouprasith garrison and a small body of Phoumi paratroops at Camp Chinaimo a few miles east of Vientiane. Sporadic street fighting and extensive artillery bombardments had ensued. On 17 December the Kong Le forces initiated a full withdrawal from the environs of Vientiane; within two days these troops were 32 miles north of the city.

(S) JCS, Joint Staff Intelligence Brief, 14, 15, 16, and 19 Dec 60; NYT, 14 Dec 60, 1, 19; ibid., 15 Dec 60, 1, 11; ibid., 17 Dec 60, 1.

16-17 Dec CINCPAC cabled to the Commanding Generals of the 3rd Marine Division and 315th Air Division an alert directive for the activation of JTF 116 (less elements in CONUS). The operations envisaged for JTF 116 were those contained in CJTF 116, OPLAN 32-60, Change I, Phase II-Laos, Third Alternate Plan. The provisions of this plan were as follows:

- 1) Airlift four Marine battalions from Okinawa to Vientiane;
- 2) Stage one Army battle group through the Philippines or Korat (Thailand) preparatory to air-drop in Laos;
- 3) Airdrop this Army battle group in the Plaine des Jarres, Luang Prabang, or where needed;
- 4) Airland two Marine battalions from Vientiane to reinforce the Army battle group;
- 5) Fly two Marine helicopter squadrons from carriers off Tourane (South Vietnam) via Seno (Laos) or Ubon (Thailand) to Vientiane;
- 6) Sealift the Army Logistical Command to Bangkok;
- 7) Sealift on order an Army Brigade Task Force and two battle groups from Hawaii;
- 8) Provide air support by US Air Force units based in Thailand and the Philippines, Carrier Strike Forces off Tourane, and a Marine air group in Vientiane or Udorn (Thailand).

In his alert directive CINCPAC specifically directed the following:

- 1) the assembly by CJTF 116 (CG, 3rd Marine Division) of the JTF 116 staff; 2) the maintenance by CG, 315th Air Division, of "high gear capability and

capability to respond to airlift requirements"; and 3) the loading of as much "sea tail" logistical backing as possible in available shipping, without, however, the loading of personnel or the alerting of the press.

Phase two of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-60 was the second of four phases. The first, or alert, phase was in continuous operation for Southeast Asia; it provided deterrence to Communist aggression, assistance to the free nations to combat and control Communist activities, and minimization of the time needed to react to more serious contingencies. Phase Two would begin with the identification of an insurgence and with a request for US or SEATO help; in this phase, US troops were to occupy "key areas" (e.g., Vientiane, Seno), freeing indigenous forces to combat the insurrection. This phase would last until the revolt subsided and stability was restored, or until the conflict expanded into overt Communist aggression. Phases Three and Four would be reactions to overt aggression by the North Vietnamese and the Chinese Communists, respectively.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CG's, 3rd Mar Div and 315th Air Div, 162357Z Dec 60; (TS) Annex B: "Concept of Operations," CINCPAC No. 32-59, 16 Dec 59; (TS) Chart 4 Notes on 3rd Alternate Concept, [n.d.]; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, 150406Z Feb 61. All in J-3 SEA Br.

17 Dec In response to the Soviet note of 13 December (see item) the US categorically rejected the charges of intervention in Laos and condemned "in strongest terms" the illegal Soviet delivery of military equipment to the rebels in Laos. The US condemned the Soviet airlift which, under cover of delivering food and petroleum products, had delivered weapons leading "directly to the suffering and chaos which have befallen Laos."

In reply to the Soviet allegation that new weapons had been introduced into Laos, the US answered that these supplies had been provided pursuant to a longstanding agreement with the Royal Laotian Government.

Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIV, 2 Jan 61, 15-16.

17 Dec CINCPAC informed the Acting CHPEO, that Phoumi should develop immediately, with a "forceful assist from PEO members," a plan of military operations that would insure the methodical elimination of opposition forces throughout Laos. CINCPAC directed that this plan be transmitted to him by the CHPEO as soon as it had been developed. (See item 23 December 60.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Acting CHPEO Laos, 170351Z Dec 60.

17 Dec Ambassador Thompson reported that the USSR had renewed its support of Souvanna. Earlier, Quinim had been described by the Soviets as "taking power in his hands"; now Quinim was depicted as a minister of the "legal government of Souvanna."

(U) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1448, 17 Dec 60.

17 Dec 60 The JCS cabled CINCPAC as follows:

1. Have checked your proposal for U.S. military

flights [see item 15-16 December 60] with General Goodpaster with following results. General policy expressed at the present is that:

a. Any flight by military aircraft must result from Lao request, and

b. Flights can only be made over Lao territory.

2. Insistent that consideration be given first to Thai reconnaissance rather than U.S. In this connection, thought was expressed that if Thais refuse, or performance inadequate, . . . or if JCS determine time lag too great, sympathetic consideration can be expected to a proposal from the JCS that the mission be performed by U.S. military aircraft.

The JCS also informed CINCPAC that they desired him to "stimulate" a Laotian request for either Thai or US reconnaissance over Laos.

In a later message, the JCS informed CINCPAC that reconnaissance in Laos was desired when practicable, since the US might have to make "grave decisions . . . in a big hurry," and would require as much late information as possible for this purpose. The JCS suggested the following means for conducting this reconnaissance, in the order of desirability:

- (1) Laotian aircraft;
- (2) CAT aircraft;
- (3) the camera-equipped attache aircraft (C-47) at Saigon; and
- (4) Air Attache aircraft accredited to Laos.

The JCS authorized the use of CAT flight personnel if CINCPAC deemed such desirable, but stipulated that the Laotian government should request such action if it became necessary to employ these personnel.

The JCS desired, if practicable, photographic and other reconnaissance of Dien Bien Phu from Laotian airspace. The JCS noted that carrier aircraft reconnaissance of North Vietnam had not been requested from "high authority" yet, but would be requested if it appeared necessary.

(On the basis of this authorization, reconnaissance flights by C-47s assigned to Air Attaches in Saigon and Vientiane were initiated - see item 24 March.)

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987431 and JCS 987432, 17 Dec 60; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Acting CHPEO Laos, 172359Z Dec 60.

18 Dec

At CINCPAC's request, the Acting CHPEO at Savannakhet "stimulated" an official request from Phoumi for photo reconnaissance of northern Laos. (See item 17 December 60.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Acting CHPEO Laos, 180045Z Dec 60; (TS) Msg, PEO Rep Savannakhet to CINCPAC, DA IN 67769, 19 Dec 60.

- 18 Dec Conversations between the Secretary of State and British and French Foreign Ministers resulted in agreement that the extraordinary SEATO council session (see item 11 December 60) would not declare its support for the Boun Oum Government. The British had demurred from such a statement because of the questionable constitutionality of the Boun Oum Government; the French planned to inform Souvanna that they held a neutral view on the Government of Laos.
- On the following day, at the close of the Special Session called by the US Representative, the SEATO Council of Representatives announced merely that civilian emergency supplies would be sent to Vientiane.
- (S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, SECTO 10, 16 Dec 60, SECTC 10, 18 Dec 60; NYT, 20 Dec 60, 1.
- 19 Dec Ambassador Whitney reported to the Secretary of State that the British Foreign Office would move on several fronts immediately to break the diplomatic log jam over Laos. Messages were in preparation to Moscow exhorting the Soviets to discontinue aid to the Pathet Lao, to the British Ambassador to Cambodia directing renewed pressure upon Souvanna to resign, and to the US urging that it dissuade the Thai and Boun Oum Governments from seeking SEATO assistance.
- (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2611, 19 Dec 60.
- 20 Dec The JCS Laos Situation Report stated that the FAL had launched a drive from Vientiane designed to disperse the "Communist elements" concentrating north of that city.
- (TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 3/60 (20 Dec 60), 9155.2/9108 (60), R&RA.
- 20 Dec The Acting CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that reconnaissance by one CAT C-47 would commence on 21 December (see item 17 December 60); that the FAL, being occupied by other missions, was unable to perform reconnaissance at that time; and that the possibility of using the Saigon attache aircraft was being considered.
- (TS) Msg, Acting CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 200745Z Dec 60.
- 20 Dec Ambassador Whitney reported that the British Government had agreed to approach the Soviet Government on reconvening the ICC for Laos if the Boun Oum Government would accept the return of the Commission.
- The UK Ambassador in Laos had been instructed to ascertain Boun Oum's views.
- (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2627, 20 Dec 60.
- 21 Dec General Phoumi consulted Ambassador Brown on the question of the new Laotian Government's legality. Phoumi said two courses were open: 1) adopt the Revolutionary Committee's line that the constitution had been suspended and the Assembly dissolved, advancing the Royal Ordinance establishing the Provisional Government (see item 12 December 60) as sufficient legal justification for the new government; or 2) request a vote of confidence from the National Assembly through regular procedures.

Ambassador Brown urged Phoumi to adopt the second course of action and seek regular constitutional acceptance in order to frustrate Communist claims of illegality, avoid another Congo situation in Laos, gain the support of the UN Secretary General, and gain the support of the UK, which had indicated its willingness to recognize a constitutionally formed government.

At the same meeting Phoumi announced that he had received several messages from Souvanna requesting a meeting. Although he planned to meet with Souvanna, Phoumi admitted that he intended to wait "until things were somewhat more stabilized."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, unnumbered, 21 Dec 60.

21 Dec The State Department received, through the US Ambassador to Cambodia, a resume of conversations between Souvanna and the British Ambassador to Phnom Penh. The British diplomat had suggested that Souvanna resign, but his sympathetic mien in listening to Souvanna's standard solution to Laotian politics unfortunately had given Souvanna to understand that the UK was of like mind.

(C) Phnom Penh to SecState, 730, 21 Dec 60.

21 Dec The US Ambassador to Vietnam, Elbridge Durbrow, reported to the Secretary of State the details of a conversation between the Ambassador and Sopsaisana, the newly appointed Laotian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Sopsaisana was considering possible first moves in his new post, among which were breaking relations with the Soviet Union and forcing the French out of Laos. Ambassador Durbrow discouraged both moves: the first because of the shaky legitimacy of the Boun Oum regime; the second on the contingency of future needs if the Communists engaged in drawn out guerrilla warfare.

As a result of this conversation, Ambassador Durbrow warned the Department of State that Sopsaisana manifested a "proclivity to take precipitous action without thinking through possible repercussions."

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState. 1202, 21 Dec 60

21 Dec Ambassador Whitney reported to the Secretary of State that "the main difference now between US and UK on Laos was that in broadening the base [of the] Boun Oum Government, which all agreed desirable, UK would find acceptable inclusion of Pathet Lao representatives, if that would calm situation, whereas US would not." The British did not share the US view of Kong Le's Communist orientation, but rather considered his alliance with the Pathet Lao to be a military expedient.

On the same day the British Counselor in Washington revealed to a Department of State official that "the UK had not been opposed to NLHX in Cabinet under Souvanna but [the] situation now different and believed unwise [to] have Communists in Cabinet."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2640, 21 Dec 60;
(C) Msg, SecState to London, 3326, 21 Dec 60.

22 Dec

The Secretary of State concurred in Ambassador Brown's view that the Boun Oum Government must receive Assembly approval (see item 21 December 60), but declared that the problem of Souvanna's presence in Phnom Penh presented an even greater problem to Western plans. He warned the Ambassador that a Souvanna resignation now would lend credence to Souvanna's pretention that he had remained in office after 12 December. The Secretary suggested that Souvanna somehow be persuaded "to step aside following and understanding with the King that his powers in fact ended with the formation of the provisional government." The Secretary also believed that Phoumi should respond to Souvanna's approaches and should consider offering Souvanna some position, perhaps an ambassadorship or minor cabinet post (see item 15 December 60). This, the Secretary claimed, would "have a devastating effect on the posture of Bloc and others as to continuing legality of his 'Government.'" (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 659, 22 Dec 60.

22 Dec

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that he suggest [REDACTED] actions to be taken for the purpose of alleviating U.S. military intervention and assisting the Laotian Government in defeating Pathet Lao Forces." With their communication the JCS included a draft memorandum from the Secretary of Defense [REDACTED] stating that Communist aerial resupply and support provided insurgents in Laos was of grave concern to the Department of Defense. If permitted to continue "without inhibition," these operations could be a vital factor in the final outcome of the conflict; also, these operations "could possibly lead to a requirement for U.S. military intervention."

[REDACTED]

(On 27 December the JCS were informed that the Deputy Secretary of Defense, after adding a statement to the effect that any action contemplated [REDACTED] implementing the suggestion of the JCS should be referred to the Department of State for approval, had on 23 December requested [REDACTED] action along the lines suggested by the JCS.)

(TS) JCSM-579-60 to SecDef, 22 Dec 60, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/888; (TS) Memo, Dep Asst to SecDef (Spec Oper) to CJCS, 27 Dec 60, quoted in (TS) N/H of JCS 1992/888, 30 Dec 60. All in 9155.2/9105 (21 Dec 60).

22 Dec

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that the Secretary approve and forward to the Secretary of State a list of the following types of military assistance that, subject to validation of specific requests, the US would continue to furnish to the Laotian Government:

a. Communication equipment as required to allow complete freedom of action for RLG forces.

b. Medical aid as required.

c. Engineer equipment and personnel.

d. Airlift of personnel and equipment.

e. Increased logistical support particularly in the areas of arms and ammunition, tanks, and mobile artillery.

The JCS pointed out that additional measures would be required if the rebels received "substantial support" from Communist sources, or overt Communist intervention occurred.

The JCS also stated in their memorandum that there still existed the potential threat of North Vietnamese intervention; confirmed intelligence indicated that Kong Le forces were being supplied by Communist air drop; and the link-up of Kong Le forces with those of the Pathet Lao "could present a formidable obstacle" to the achievement of US objectives in Laos. The JCS believed that the situation required decisive and expeditious action, and that the US should "express in concrete terms its intent to block further Communist encroachment in Southeast Asia generally and in Laos specifically." Accordingly, the JCS felt that the response to the recent Laotian Government formal request for US assistance (see item 15 December 60) should make clear the determination of the US to support friendly governments. In conclusion the JCS requested that the Laotian Government be informed in the formal US response of the assistance the US would continue to provide. (See item 30 December 60.)

(TS) JCSM-580-60, derived from JCS 1992/882, 22 Dec 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (20 Dec 60).

22 Dec In a note to the UK, the USSR requested a revival of the 1954 Geneva Control Commission (the ICC) to consider the Laotian situation. The note suggested that the UK and the Soviet Union "address a message to the United States asking it to assist in the efforts of the two chairmen to normalize the situation." It further charged the US with "crude interference" in Laos.

NYT, 24 Dec 60, 3.

23 Dec India appealed for US support in reviving the three-power International Supervisory Commission (ICC) in Laos. The Commission, composed of India, Canada, and Poland, had been established in 1954 to oversee provisions of the Geneva Conference. At the request of the Laotian Government it had been suspended in July 1958.

Also on 23 December the Department of State presented to Ambassador Brown its objection to the reconvening of the ICC/Laos: i.e., that the ICC as an independent entity would have no restrictions on the subjects it might choose to investigate. A graceful exit was afforded by the fact that the Laotian Government in any event, would not invite the ICC to investigate on these terms.

The Department of State suggested a counter-proposal which might work to the advantage of the US.

The ICC might be reconvened with a limited jurisdiction--the investigation of specific Laotian complaints. Then Laos could complain specifically and solely about the illegal introduction of arms to rebel elements.

The advantages seen in this plan were several:
1) the impression of US flexibility and moderation;
2) the impression that the US had nothing to hide;
3) the opportunity to emphasize the continuing Communist threat to Laos; 4) the gain in stature which the Boun Oum Government would receive if its offer were accepted by the ICC.

The disadvantages were also numerous: 1) the difficulty of persuading the Laotian Government to invite the ICC; 2) the difficulty in preventing the Communist member, Poland, from expanding the investigation to counter-complaints; 3) the status conferred on the rebels in the recognition of their presence as an element in Laos; 4) the equivocal nature of the Indian position; and 5) the possibility that evidence, however specious, against Thailand and US might be accepted by a too scrupulously neutral Indian chairman.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 674, 23 Dec 60;
NYT, 24 Dec 60, 1.

23 Dec In reply to CINCPAC's demand for a general operational plan (see item 17 December 60), the PEO Representative at Savannakhet cabled CINCPAC the outline of a three-phase Phoumi plan. Phase I of the plan would disperse and destroy the enemy forces in the mountainous area between Luang Prabang and Vientiane by 31 January 1961; Phase II would regain control of Sam Neua Province by 31 March 1961; and Phase III would regain control of Phong Saly Province by 31 May 1961. Throughout these phases, anti-guerrilla operations would be conducted by auto-defense forces and Meo irregulars.

(S) Msg, PEO Rep Savannakhet to CINCPAC,
DA IN 71509, 23 Dec 60.

23 Dec The JCS suggested to CINCPAC the deployment of an Intelligence Mobile Training Team (MTT) to Laos. After stating that an effective military intelligence organization would be an important factor in the efforts of the Laotian military forces, the JCS informed CINCPAC that the US Army was prepared to furnish promptly a four- to eight-man team, and requested him to advise them whether or not he desired such a group (see item 7 January 61).

(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987702, 23 Dec 60.

23-24 Dec CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the RLG develop a "minimum military air capability" to exercise its right to the control of Laotian air space. To this end, CINCPAC recommended the following courses of action:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] 3) a contract with Air America for maintenance of the T-6's; 4) an announcement by the RLG, as soon as five Laotian pilots had become proficient in the T-6, that no further intervention by foreign aircraft would be

tolerated and that Lao pilots would be ordered to shoot down intruders; and 5) a "try to bag a few birds"--even an unsuccessful attempt would be enough, according to CINCPAC, to "discourage" the enemy. CINCPAC also advocated the use of T-6's for reconnaissance and for attacks against Pathet Lao artillery and trucking.

On the following day, the JCS informed CINCPAC that his recommendations had been favorably received. The JCS authorized CINCPAC to proceed immediately with 1) above; however, the JCS noted that full State Department concurrence had not yet been obtained and ordered that the courses of action advocated in 2) through 5) above be held in abeyance for the present (see item 27 December 60). On 25 December, CINCPAC ordered CHPEO to secure the requisite Phoumi - Sarit agreement (see item 28 December 60).

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 232339Z Dec 60;
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 987781, 24 Dec 60;
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, DA IN 69734, 25 Dec 60.

24 Dec British, French, and American representatives in Washington agreed that, until Souvanna had either resigned or been readmitted to the Laotian Government, it would be useless to suggest that the Soviets cease arms shipment.

(S) SecState to London, 3353, 24 Dec 60.

25 Dec In his first press interview in Cambodia Souvanna announced that he had contacted both Souphanouvong and Boun Oum requesting a conference in Phnom Penh to arrange a cease-fire in Laos. He claimed Souphanouvong had already agreed. Noting that his repeatedly proposed plan for a national coalition had the support of the UK and France, Souvanna warned the US that only this plan offered the promise that "the communization of Laos within a few years" could be prevented.

(U) Msg, Phnom Pehn to SecState 751, 25 Dec 60.

25 Dec The US Ambassador in Moscow reported his belief to the Secretary of State that the Soviets had built up a considerable feeling of righteousness about the cause of their Laotian allies beyond strict considerations of national interest.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1492, 25 Dec 60.

25 Dec In a message to the Secretary of State the US Ambassador in London defended Nehru's proposal to reconvene the ICC without limited jurisdiction (see item 14 December 60). He listed the following advantages: 1) it would improve US "posture" in the eyes of the Indians and other Asian neutrals; 2) it would facilitate UK efforts to cooperate with the US in Laos by answering the government's domestic critics; 3) if Souvanna could be "de-legalized" at the same time, it would create a dilemma for the Soviets: either they must oppose the returning ICC or be indicted for illegally supplying the rebels; and 4) the ICC in Laos could conceivably be of some help as it had been in Vietnam, despite the difficulties posed by the Poles and the Indians.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 2662, 25 Dec 60.

26 Dec The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State the current French attitude on possible solutions to the Laos dilemma. The French felt that any non-Communist coalition must include all non-Communist political elements, including Souvanna. The French considered that otherwise the continued alienation of Souvanna's still formidable following and the understandable Soviet and Viet Minh apprehension concerning an obviously pro-Western regime would leave all Laotian problems unsolved. For the French, a genuinely neutral government, perhaps "sympathetic" to the West, was the only possible solution.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2606, 26 Dec 60.

26 Dec Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State his Country Team's judgment against the reconvening of the ICC in Laos (see item 14 December 60):

1) Reconvening the ICC would provide a tremendous psychological boost for the Communists and the Pathet Lao/NLHX, who had been incessantly demanding its return. Conversely, such action would "discourage if not shake to its very foundations the present Royal Laotian Government."

2) If reconvened, the ICC would eventually be forced to investigate charges against the US and Thailand. "It should not be necessary," the Ambassador warned, "to emphasize our vulnerability and [the] extreme importance [of the] avoidance such a possibility."

3) ICC scrutiny would be likely to impair US capacity to render necessary military support and training to the RLG. Though the current Soviet intervention was serious, the Ambassador believed ICC interference with US military efforts in Laos would be even more perilous.

4) In spite of the recognized difficulties, the Country Team preferred a Laotian appeal to the Security Council where, even though the charges would be subject to Soviet veto, the publicity would force a halt to the Soviet airlift.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1180, 26 Dec 60;
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 6275, 28 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

27 Dec The Department of State informed Ambassador Brown of the "Joint State-Defense concept" to proceed with all actions immediately necessary to implement CINCPAC's 23 December proposal for a Laotian air capability (see item 23-24 December 60). For the purpose of providing a political basis for CINCPAC's plan, Ambassador Brown was ordered to urge the RLG to: (1) formally protest the illegal Soviet airlift; (2) instruct the Lao UN delegation to circulate a memorandum to other delegations setting forth the facts of Soviet violations; and (3) issue a statement that if violations continued the RLG would be forced to take steps to defend its airspace. In addition, Ambassador Brown was to insure that Phoumi understood the envisaged plan and that Phoumi was informed that the US would consider favorably a request for 10 armed T-6's upon the actualization of the proper political

basis. (See item 7 January 61.)

(On the same day the JCS provided CINCPAC with a copy of this message.)

(TS) SecState to Vientiane, 688, 27 Dec 60.

27 Dec The US Ambassador to India reported to the Secretary of State as "practically certain" that India would reject any US proposal to limit the jurisdiction of the ICC (see item 23 December 60). Since India considered US activities in Laos "provocative" and had not accepted the Boun Oum Government, it would never accept such a proposal. India would consider the US proposal a cold war measure, the Ambassador warned, "obviously designed only to expose USSR contravention of Geneva accords."

The Ambassador listed several possible advantages accruing to the US if the ICC were reconvened on India's terms: 1) The ICC would keep an eye on Laos-South Vietnam border and so limit Viet Minh infiltration into Vietnam; 2) The presence of the ICC might frustrate Soviet attempts to reconvene the Geneva Powers (see item 22 December 60); 3) If the ICC could convince Kong Le of Laotian neutrality, he might defect from the Pathet Lao; and 4) US prestige in India would rise, and India would be at least partially convinced that the US was "now more flexible and understanding of the verities in Laos."

The Ambassador concluded by warning Washington that although India wished North Vietnamese and Chinese influence withdrawn from Laos, it would also demand an end to Western influence on the purely political plane.


(S) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1321, 27 Dec 60.

28 Dec CINCPAC stated to JCS his objections to the Department of State's views on the reconvening of the ICC/Laos (see item 24 December 60). CINCPAC felt that the Soviet bloc would not be deterred by unfavorable publicity from its support of the Pathet Lao, and would absorb any criticism for the sake of consolidating its gains. CINCPAC concluded, therefore, that the Department of State's proposals could not hope for success, and could only jeopardize the US investment in Laos.

CINCPAC advocated a clear statement of our commitment in Laos; this commitment should comprise a firm meeting of the Soviet challenge in Laos, akin to the US response to the Taiwan threat. Specifically, CINCPAC proposed the use of "any effective method of halting immediately" the Soviet airlift, destroying the ammunition dump at Vang Vieng, recovering or destroying the supplies delivered by the Soviet airlift, and buttressing Phoumi for a long campaign against the Pathet Lao.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 6275, 28 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

28 Dec

 CHPEO stated that the Laotian Air Force was short of pilots

and lacking in maintenance capability; additional maintenance personnel would be required. CHPEO also stated that the exact number and whereabouts of Laotian Air Force personnel were unknown to either the CHPEO or the FAL. Moreover, the French personnel who had advised the Laotian Air Force had been "asked not to return."

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 70251, 28 Dec 60.

28 Dec King Savang Vathana expressed his views on Laotian politics in an audience granted to Ambassador Brown.

The King desired to obtain maximum legality for the Boun Oum Government. To this end, he had suggested to the politicians that a special Assembly session be convened, in which the Assembly could approve the present government as provisional, and subsequently turn itself into a constituent assembly to revise the constitution and create for the Boun Oum group a constitutional basis for permanency.

The King was chagrined by the Boun Oum officials' contention that as true "revolutionaries," they had revolted against the constitution, and could not submit themselves to this constitution's assembly, a body that, under Souvanna, had so often approved measures harmful to Laos (see item 21 December 60).

The King also expressed to Ambassador Brown his opposition to the return of the ICC. The King considered that the ICC, through the Polish Representative, had in the past provided a cover for subversive Communist activities, and had encouraged the Pathet Lao. (Ambassador Brown also remarked that the King had expressed to the British Ambassador his additional feeling that the reconvening of the ICC would be a moral victory for the North Vietnamese.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1189, 28 Dec 60.

29 Dec The Department of State instructed Ambassador Brown to inform the Laotian Government of the extreme peril facing Laos, owing to the international community's grave misgivings concerning the legitimacy, responsibility, and intentions of the Boun Oum regime. Authorizing every means short of threatening US withdrawal of support, the Department of State ordered Brown to insure that:

1. Steps would be taken "to place unquestioned cloak of legality over present government";
2. Agitation for removal of the French Military Mission would cease;
3. Unqualified assurance would be given by the government that it was working for a unified Laos with no thought of partition (permanent removal of the government from Savannakhet to Vientiane would fulfill this assurance);
4. The Laotian government would produce for UN circulation a protest on USSR interference;
5. The Government would refrain from any arbitrary military changes which might endanger the

approval of aid funds from any future US Congress;

6. Gratuitous attacks upon the Geneva Accords would be avoided.

It was left to Ambassador Brown's discretion whether or not to mention to the Laotian Government the sapping effect upon the Pathet Lao which a declaration of amnesty would produce.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 698, 29 Dec 60.

30 Dec The Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) forwarded to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs the memorandum of the JCS on the types of military assistance that the US should continue to provide to the Laotian Government (see item 22 December 60). In his covering letter, the Acting Assistant Secretary noted that the US had already replied to the Laotian Government's request for assistance, and action had already been initiated to satisfy most of the recommendations of the JCS. Nevertheless, he went on to say, the memorandum of the JCS was being transmitted to provide the Department of State with a record of their views. The need for the additional measures referred to by the JCS had already become apparent, and were under consideration by the Departments of State and Defense. The Acting Assistant Secretary closed by assuring the Under Secretary that Defense representatives would continue "to coordinate closely" with State representatives to ensure the timely execution and funding of emergency support requirements for Laos.

(TS) Ltr, Knight to Merchant, 30 Dec 60, JMF 9155.2/9105 (20 Dec 60).

30 Dec In a letter to the US Ambassador in Cambodia Souvanna Phouma, after presenting his detailed version of recent Laotian history, endorsed Sihanouk's proposal regarding the neutralization of Cambodia and Laos. (See item 12 December 60.)
(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 772, 30 Dec 60.

30 Dec The JCS Laos Situation Report contained the outline of a new operation plan developed by the FAL for the attack on Vang Vieng, the Kong Le-Pathet Lao stronghold. The new plan would employ three coordinated drives upon that city: north from Vientiane, south from Luang Prabang, and west from the Plaine des Jarres.

The current front line units, operating north from Vientiane since 20 December (see item), would hold their positions south of Vang Vieng awaiting the arrival of the other two columns for a coordinated attack on that city.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 10/60 (30 Dec 60), 9155.2/9108 (60) R&RA.

31 Dec CINCPAC warned the JCS that, with full realization of the seriousness of the decision, he believed the US must intervene now or surrender Northern Laos to the Communists. He outlined the course of Communist military actions which were leading to a division of the country. He further warned that the attacks against Luang Prabang and Vientiane would result in the envelopment and serious decimation of the FAL, which would be fortunate to "retain the southern half

~~TOP SECRET~~ of Laos." He pointed to the Soviet airlift, the Soviet helicopter found in Thailand, and the Soviet arms captured by the FAL as proof of overt Communist aggression. These acts, he argued, justified US intervention.

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 7293, 31 Dec 60, 7305, 31 Dec 60, and DA 988045, 31 Dec 60, JCS Secretariat.

31 Dec The JCS informed CINCPAC of the results of a high-level meeting in Washington. The decision had been reached that "efforts to legalize the Laos Government would not be at the expense or delay of any military action." At the same time, recourse to the UN or SEATO or re-establishment of the ICC had also been rejected. CINCPAC was also informed of further decisions made at the meeting:

1. The Department of State would undertake action to get Souvanna Phouma to resign.

2. Boun Oum would be urged to "legitimatise" his government in order to attract a greater degree of international support.

3. Diplomatic representations would be made to the UK and France to enlist their support for the US position.

4. State would arrange a SEATO Council meeting in order to impress the Communist bloc with the seriousness of the Laotian situation.

5. A stiff diplomatic note to the USSR would express US concern over Soviet activities in Laos.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA OUT 988041, 31 Dec 60.

31 Dec The Chief, PEO suggested to Phoumi, as an interim measure to the provision of T-6s (see item 28 December 60), the arming of FAL C-47's to harass Pathet Lao columns and possibly Russian aircraft, but Phoumi had demurred, stating that such action might in turn cause the Russians to supply weapons of greater firepower (see item 23 December 60).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 71214, 31 Dec 60; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 310338Z Dec 60.

31 Dec The US Air Attache in Saigon reported, upon the completion of a C-47 reconnaissance mission over Laos, that the C-47 was not the proper aircraft for such missions. He recommended that armed photo reconnaissance be instituted at the earliest possible moment.

The US Military Attache in Vientiane, in passing the mission report to Headquarters USAF, recommended further that a mobile combat intelligence center be established in an "adjacent country" to process the aerial photographs obtained by reconnaissance missions.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to Hq USAF, 311430Z Dec 60; (S) Msg, AIRA Saigon to CO, 13th AF, 311601Z Dec 60.

31 Dec The Department of State ordered that all SEATO nations be informed that the US was requesting an immediate extraordinary meeting of the Council of Representatives to exchange views on the gravely deteriorating Laotian situation and to consider possible courses of action. In preparation for this meeting, the Department ordered its Ambassadors to inform the SEATO governments of the US assessment of the Laotian situation and its recommendations for a solution. Primarily, the US recommended that a common effort be made to increase international acceptance of the Boun Oum Government. Steps should also be taken to support the Royal Laotian Government in its effort to regain control of Laotian territory now occupied by Communist forces and to re-establish order in the Kingdom.

The RLG was being urged, for its part, to: improve its international posture by immediately undertaking National Assembly action to legitimize the Government; make official protest to the USSR concerning the Soviet airlift; and to circulate a protest among UN members concerning Soviet intervention. The US assured SEATO members that it was making every effort to prevent Laotian appeals for SEATO or UN action without advance consultation.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, et al., 986, 31 Dec 60.

31 Dec In a statement to the press a Department of State spokesman warned that the US, mindful of its obligations under the SEATO Treaty, "would take the most serious view of any intervention in Laos by the Chinese Communists or Viet Minh armed forces or others in support of the Communist Pathet Lao, who are in rebellion against the Royal Laotian Government." Dept of State Bulletin, vol XLIV (16 Jan 61), 76.

31 Dec The State Department announced to Ambassador Brown, as well as to US envoys to Paris, London, and

Canberra, that the Department was calling in French and British representatives to re-explore the possibility of a common front on Laos. The Department anticipated that the British and French would urge acceptance of Souvanna as Premier for any coalition government. As a counter-proposal the US would suggest Phoui as a candidate for the premiership.

(S) SecState to Vientiane, 707, 31 Dec 60.

31 Dec The Acting Secretary of State informed the Indian Ambassador that after sober and careful consideration the US rejected the return of the ICC to Laos; return was at this time neither feasible nor desirable. (See items 14 and 23 December 60.)

(S) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL, 928, 31 Dec 60;
NYT, 31 Dec 60, 4.

1 Jan

Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia dispatched letters to the heads of state of thirteen other nations, suggesting an international conference on Laos. This proposal was a continuation of Sihanouk's campaign for a "neutral belt," (see item 29 September 60) in which neutrality would be proclaimed by Laos and Cambodia and guaranteed by the great powers (see item 12 Dec 60). The suggested participants in the conference were: the Geneva signatories - France, UK, USSR, North Vietnam, Communist China, Cambodia, and Laos; the ICC members - India, Poland and Canada; neighboring powers - Thailand, South Vietnam, and Burma; and "other interested powers" - the US.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 767, 29 Dec 60; AP, 11 Jan 61, 15 Jan 61.

1 Jan

Discussions between the French Charge d'Affaires and Under Secretary of State Merchant in Washington and the US Ambassador and French officials in Paris revealed the continued French opposition to SEATO pronouncements on Laos. Such pronouncements, the French claimed, would tender recognition to the Boun Oum Government, and France had consistently rejected any discussion of the RLG's legality in SEATO. He warned that France would oppose any communique on Laos being issued by the current Council meeting (see item 31 December 60) and hoped these US-French differences would not become too obvious before other Council members. To that end, the French minister had been instructed to "adopt a very reserved position on all matters except the exchange of information." (See item 6 January 61.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2760, 1 Jan 61; Msg, Paris to SecState, 2664, 2 Jan 61.

1 Jan

The State Department explained to the French Charge d'Affaires the US position on reconvening the ICC. The US pointed out that, unless the Indian Government accepted the legality of the Boun Oum Government, the likelihood was that the Indian representative on the ICC would vote with the Polish representative.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2760, 1 Jan 61.

2 Jan

In the same conversation, Sarit had urged that the US act immediately to equip and support two Thai regimental combat teams to be trained in unconventional warfare for use either as "volunteers" or as part of an organized SEATO force.

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 71505, 2 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1158, 2 Jan 61.

2 Jan The Laotian representative to the UN announced the invasion of Laos by an estimated 6 battalions of North Vietnamese troops.

(U) Msg, NY to SecState, 1877, 4 Jan 61; NYT, 3 Jan 61, 1, AP, 3 Jan 61.

2 Jan The Laotian representative in London delivered to the Soviet Embassy a note vigorously protesting "open Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Laos." The text of the note was also presented to the Secretary General of the United Nations, with a request that it be circulated among all UN members.

The Soviet Embassy in London copied the substance of the note but refused to "accept" it, since the USSR did not recognize the Boun Oum regime.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1224, 1 Jan 61; (U) Msg, London to SecState, 2734, 4 Jan 61; (U) Msg, New York to SecState, 1871, 1 Jan 61.

3 Jan According to the JCS Laos Situation Report FAL forces from Luang Prabang were reported to be headed south toward RJ 7-13 and Vang Vieng (see items 30 December 60 and 14 January 61). (The thrust from the Plaine des Jarres which the 30 December plan had envisioned did not materialize because of a Pathet Lao offensive in that area-- see item 7 Jan 61.)

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 2/61 - 4/61 (3 - 5 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

3 Jan The JCS requested CINCPAC's appraisal of the forces, either SEATO or US unilaterally, necessary "to clear out Laos and restore acceptable degree of order to the country" in 30 to 45 days. For purposes of planning CINCPAC was ordered to assume no overt DRV or Chinese intervention beyond the present supply support and volunteer forces and to accept, as the primary objective, control of all key communication and population centers and the reduction of Kong Le/PL forces into disorganized bands.

In his answer on 6 January, CINCPAC outlined a plan calling for a 24,000 man force including three battle groups and three marine battalions with air and naval support to gain and maintain control of key areas and "to reestablish the situation approximating that extant prior to Kong Le Coup, with the Boun Oum government in control except for [the] northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua." CINCPAC believed it "extremely doubtful," however, that the Kong Le/PL force could be reduced to guerrilla bands within the 45 day limit. This was a task for Lao themselves, CINCPAC charged, "but with our help of course."

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA 988094, 3 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8744, 6 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

- 3 Jan A Soviet representative informed Ambassador Thompson that the USSR would be "favorably disposed" to the reconvening of the ICC only if Souvanna agreed.
(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1538, 4 Jan 61.
- 3 Jan The views of King Savang were set forth in interviews with a UN representative and a French diplomat. The King was hostile to Kong Le, but conciliatory towards Souvanna. The King had been encouraging the Boun Oum regime to present itself to the National Assembly for investiture, and would encourage this government's consideration of any new control commission which might be established by a reconvened Geneva Conference; the King was utterly opposed, however, to the reactivation of the ICC, since such reactivation represented to him capitulation to the Chinese Communists and North Vietnamese.
(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2669, 3 Jan 61; (U) Msg, New York to SecState, 1878, 4 Jan 61.
- 4 Jan The US Military Attache in Vientiane reported that Soviet aircraft were known to have delivered 55 planeloads of materiel to the Kong Le forces in Vientiane between 5 and 15 December. Thirty planes were observed between 5 and 8 December delivering POL; 25 additional flights between 11 and 13 December had brought several howitzers and mortars as well as crates believed to contain ammunition. The Soviet airlift to Vientiane had ceased on 13 December, the attache reported. Commencing on 20 December, however, air drops to the Kong Le forces moving north from Vientiane had been observed. These air drops continued in the Vang Vieng area through the end of the month. The final day of December saw the initiation of Soviet air drops in Xieng Khouang province.
(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 71864, 4 Jan 61.
- 4 Jan Ambassador Whitney received from the British Foreign Office confirmation that the British had received a note from Boun Oum stating that the Laotian Government would consider accepting the ICC if all of the Geneva signatories agreed, and if the request came to the Laotian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Geneva co-chairmen (UK and USSR).

The British reply to the Laotian note stipulated that the British envisioned that any request to the Laotians would be made by the ICC chairman, India, rather than by the co-chairmen.
(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2729, 4 Jan 61.
- 5 Jan Ambassador Brown reported that the Laotian National Assembly, in extraordinary session, had withdrawn its confidence from Souvanna Phouma, alleging that his government had dissolved itself as of 9 December 1960. In the same motion, the Assembly confirmed its investiture of the Boun Oum Government as of 4 January 1961.
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1296, 9 Jan 61.
- 5 Jan The French Ambassador in Washington urged upon the State Department the necessity of a tripartite collaboration in which the US, UK, and France might achieve a common approach to the USSR on the question of Laos. This approach would state that the three

Western powers "believe in" non-intervention in Laos and indicate that the cessation of Soviet arms shipments into Laos must ensue if the Soviets want "general detente." Assuming Soviet agreement to non-intervention, approaches to the neighbors of Laos would then be made in order that they too would stop furnishing arms. "Thereafter, various Lao elements, not including Pathet Lao, should be able to form government corresponding to their character and a neutral, peaceful Laos emerge."

The State Department posed as a serious drawback to such a tripartite approach the destructive effect this approach would produce upon the confidence which the US, UK, and France had nurtured so carefully in the smaller Asian allies.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2804, 5 Jan 61.

5 Jan CINCPAC requested the US military representatives in Thailand and Vietnam to provide their best estimates of the number of combat-worthy F8F aircraft available in their respective areas. CHMAAG Vietnam replied that Vietnam possessed two F8F aircraft immediately flyable and seven aircraft requiring varying degrees of maintenance to attain combat readiness. CHJUSMAG Thailand estimated that the RTAF possessed 20 combat-worthy aircraft of this type.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand and CHMAAG Vietnam, 050132Z Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Vietnam to CINCPAC, 050927Z Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 72316, 5 Jan 61.

6 Jan After its third session in a week the special meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives adjourned without issuing a statement. The Council had been convened at the request of the US to discuss the Laotian crisis. (See items 31 December 60 and 1 January 61.)
AP, 6 Jan 61.

6 Jan The USSR advised the Western Powers that it would not agree to any formula for ending the civil war in Laos that was based on recognition of the Boun Oum Government.
AP, 6 Jan 61.

6 Jan

CINCPAC heartily endorsed this plan and recommended that the JCS support it and "others which may follow, through which Meo may be used to better advantage than has been [the] case heretofore." Long-standing jealousies and suspicions between the Meo and Lao people, cautioned CINCPAC, made unlikely Phoumi's consent to any large scale supply of Meo forces.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 060117Z Jan 61.

7 Jan The State Department learned from the British Embassy in Washington that the Indian Ambassador to Moscow had been instructed to approach the Soviet government with a new proposal for reactivation of the ICC in Laos.

The Indian position was that India was willing to serve on any reconvened ICC, provided that:

1. the request for reactivation came from the Geneva co-chairmen;
2. the reactivated Commission would approach the King, rather than the Laotian government;
3. the Boun Oum regime could not impose any restrictions upon the ICC;
4. the Canadian and Polish governments would agree to assume their share of the responsibility.

The British were distressed that the Indians had gone directly to the USSR without prior coordination with UK; by this action the British were forced to support the Indian demarche in order to maintain a conciliatory posture. The British requested that the US also support the Indian approach.

The State Department objected to the Indian proposals on two counts, the first as being impracticable, the second as being undesirable:

1. "The King would not . . . agree to the Commission making initial contact with him." Because the Laotian King was a constitutional monarch only, both the US and the King would consider it improper that governmental proposals be presented to the King.
 2. The proposals would deny the Boun Oum regime its sovereign right to impose conditions upon the readmission of the ICC to Laos. This suggested to the US the "intent . . . not to recognize the government or else to equate it with rebels, the former PL."
- (C) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL, 976, 8 Jan 61.

7 Jan

Ambassador Brown suggested to the State Department the creation of a neutral mediation group, comprising true Asian neutrals. Ambassador Brown reported that the Laotian Government would accept such a commission, as would the neutrals. He argued that if the West could accept the Commission the Bloc countries would be forced either to accept or to disappoint the neutral Asian nations.

As a means of initiating such an action, Ambassador Brown suggested having the Laotian Government ask one of the neutrals to act as Chairman and seek the agreement of other neutrals; terms of reference could be worked out between the Laotian Government and the Chairman of the Commission.

Commenting upon Ambassador Brown's proposal, the US Ambassador to Thailand cautioned that the US enjoyed little sympathy among Asian neutrals. But the US Ambassador to Cambodia advised that, if such a neutral commission included Cambodia, Sihanouk would be mollified even though his 14-nation conference proposal (see item 1 January 61) was being discarded.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1285, 7 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1213, 9 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 825, 10 Jan 61.

7 Jan

The Secretary of State informed Ambassadors Brown and Johnson of decisions reached at a State-Defense meeting. Among other items the Secretary noted:

1) The US would authorize: a) the use of US aircraft for logistical support of the RLG if required and if CAT aircraft proved inadequate; b)

and c) the use of up to 10 T-6 aircraft, armed with guns and rockets only, by the Laotian air force for interdicting the Soviet airlift (see items 7 and 19 January 61).

2) The US would issue a warning to the USSR on the continuance of its airlift support of the Pathet Lao, but only after the principle allies of the US had been informed.

3) The US would request the RLG to issue a note warning the USSR against continued violation of Laotian air space and a note requesting any US assistance in air actions as might be subsequently agreed upon by the two governments (see item 11 January 61).

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 733, 7 Jan 61.

7 Jan

CINCPAC informed the JCS that, in his view, reinstatement of the ICC in Laos would serve very well the policies of the Communist Bloc, the neutrals, and others, but certainly not the national interests of the US. The ICC, he believed, would equate legally introduced US aid to the FAL with Bloc aid to the PL, and while US aid would thereby be seriously hampered, clandestine resupply of the PL would continue. Moreover, if direct intervention by SEATO or the US unilaterally was infeasible at this time, the only way Laos could be saved was by a substantial increase in US support. Covert operations by the US or Thailand in the presence of the ICC would be "uncomfortably vulnerable" to exposure. Most important, CINCPAC believed, the ICC would tend to foreclose the threat of SEATO intervention, thus removing Bloc fears of Western opposition in Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 9334, 7 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

7 Jan

By this date, after a week of heavy fighting, the bulk of the FAL forces in the Plaine des Jarres area had, according to the JCS Laos Situation Reports, withdrawn by stages to a position approximately 40 miles southeast of Xieng Khouang city. This withdrawal left the Pathet Lao in effective control of the vital central plain of Laos.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 1/61 - 6/61 (2 Jan-7 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

7 Jan

As a result of a State-Defense meeting presided over by the Secretary of State, the JCS ordered all current restrictions on the use of T-6 aircraft in Laos lifted with one stipulation: no bombs could be employed against any Laotian target.

On the same day restrictions against CINCPAC's use of US military aircraft for moving supplies into Laos were also lifted. The JCS authorized this action, however, with the understanding that all CAT aircraft would be operating at full capacity before any US aircraft would be used.

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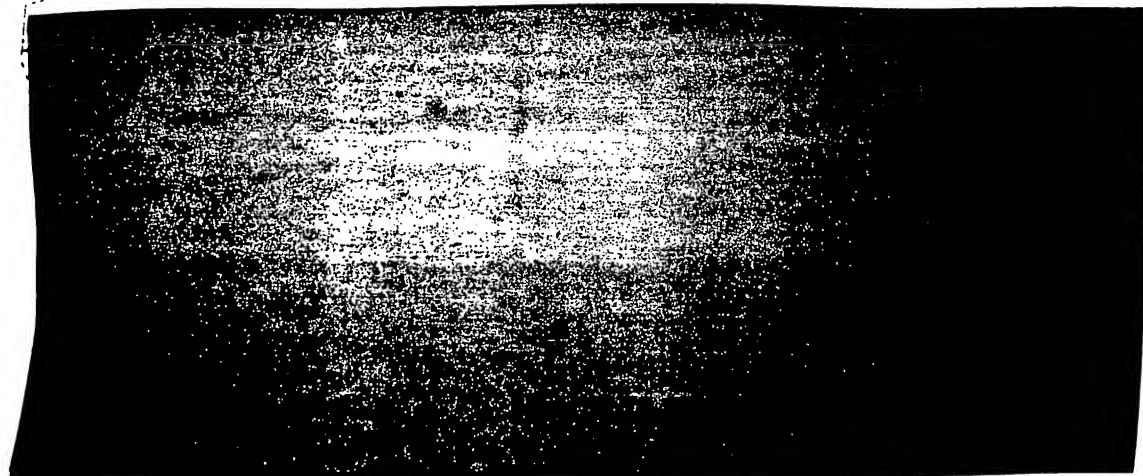
Answering the same day, CINCPAC urged that the restrictions against bombing in Laos be lifted. He suggested that the Ambassador in Laos leave the choice of weapons up to the military and argued that there was no more provocation to killing Communists with bombs than with bullets. He also claimed that bombing Communist supply airfields would not necessarily result in Bloc retaliation.

CINCPAC scorned the claim that forceful US action in Laos would result in another Korea or World War III. He viewed the Laotian problem as simply a guerrilla insurrection kept alive by outside support. He predicted that the Lao "can fight and will fight if we stand up alongside of them."

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, DA 988337 and 988339, 7 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 9317, 7 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

7 Jan CINCPAC outlined to the commander of Joint Task Force 116 the mission contemplated for that task force in the event of unilateral US intervention in Laos. The mission, according to CINCPAC, was to "deploy rapidly to Laos and make an airborne assault and airlanded operation" to (1) seize key areas on the Plaine des Jarres to permit establishment of a base for supporting further FAL operations in northern Laos; (2) seize or secure Luang Prabang as necessary and defend that area in conjunction with FAL forces; and (3) conduct other assault operations as necessary to permit the linking up of friendly forces in the Vientiane-Luang Prabang-Plaine des Jarres complex. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, DA IN 72908, 7 Jan 61.

7 Jan



On the same day, CINCPAC requested the Intelligence MTT suggested by the JCS on 23 December 1960 (see item). Regarding the qualifications of the team members, CINCPAC endorsed the recommendations of CHPEO: (1) maturity and motivation were more important than combat intelligence experience, rank, or MOS; (2) fluent French or Thai was prerequisite to the successful functioning of each individual; (3) the team should arrive in Laos as soon as possible, for a tour of 180 days; and (4) the team should be deployed in pairs to the Laotian military regions. CHPEO had emphasized that this short range program could not be a substitute for a long range program of training the FAL in all aspects of military intelligence; CINCPAC concurred in this view.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 070440Z Jan 61; (S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 72525, 6 Jan 61; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 73220, 8 Jan 61.

9 Jan

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1214, 9 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 74111, 11 Jan 61.

9 Jan

The British replied to US objections to the Indian Government's 7 January demarche to Moscow (see item). The British argued that the ICC's contact with the King would be a "dodge," designed to overcome Communist objections to dealing with Boun Oum. The British anticipated that once the ICC had been formally introduced into Laos, the King could then refer it to the Boun Oum Government who could then establish terms of reference for the Commission's operation within Laos. The British argued that any attempt to frame terms of reference prior to ICC entry into Laos would surely break down.

On 11 January Ambassador Houghton reported the French reaction to the Indian proposal. The French would acquiesce in the Indian proposal but would play no active role in its implementation.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 2775, 9 Jan 61; (C) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 2748, 9 Jan 61, 2778, 11 Jan 61.

9 Jan

CINCPAC warned the JCS that if, as recent messages indicated, the US was moving toward an international political solution of the Laotian problem, it must choose one which would not "hand the Communists military advantages while inhibiting our ability to react militarily should the political solution fail." He particularly scored suggestions of a Laotian appeal to the UN, a reconconvocation of the Geneva Conference, or a reactivation of the ICC, as inimical to US military plans--which, in the absence of direct SEATO or US intervention, were dependent on massive resupply of the RLG. He admitted, however, that from the viewpoint of the US a neutral mediation group, other than the ICC, might have more to offer.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 0121, 9 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

10 Jan

The JCS Laos Situation Report stated that, having secured the crossroads of Routes 7 and 13 on the Vientiane-Luang Prabang road on 9 January, the FAL initiated an offensive eastward from the junction toward the Plaine des Jarres in order to capture that region in conjunction with the FAL forces attacking from positions southeast of Xieng Khouang (see item 7 January 61).

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 7/61 and 8/61 (9 Jan and 10 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

10-11
Jan

[REDACTED]

to supply carbines, grenades, anti-personnel mines, and other "sabotage items," required for the "imminent" support of irregulars in unconventional warfare in the Xieng Khouang-Plaine des Jarres area.

On the following day [REDACTED] concerted and repeated efforts [REDACTED] had failed to persuade Phoumi to authorize direct support to these Meo forces. Phoumi's adamant position was that the Meos were untrustworthy and primitive; the Meo leaders had hoodwinked the US authorities; and in any event all support must be through the FAL which was already providing adequately for the Meo needs. [REDACTED] The decision to seek Phoumi's approval had been taken because of the US conviction that large scale aid to the Meo could not be concealed from the FAL. [REDACTED]

11 Jan Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State progress made towards the achievement of the US's multiple demands upon the Laotian government (see item 29 December 60).

The Boun Oum government had been legalized since 5 January (see item); the dangers of partition and of arbitrary military changes had diminished; the Laotian government had formally protested Soviet interference (see item 2 January 61); and the RLG had issued no attacks upon the Geneva accord.

However, Phoumi had remained adamant in his anti-French posture. He was still intent upon removing the French, and to this end had dismissed French advisors, ignored French diplomatic representations, and requested the return of Seno air base to Laotian control.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1317, 11 Jan 61.

11 Jan Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that the Boun Oum government had issued a circular note warning the USSR on the airlift supply of the Pathet Lao rebels. The RLG also called upon the US to provide assistance in air reconnaissance and other "counter actions as both governments may subsequently agree on." (These notes were prompted by the State-Defense decision of 7 January - see item.)

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1316, 11 Jan 61.

11 Jan In interviews on 9 January and 11 January with a British diplomat and an American correspondent, respectively, Souvanna set forth once again his views upon Laotian affairs. Souvanna continued to maintain that the Boun Oum government was illegal. Deprived of his constitutional argument (see item 5 January 61), Souvanna now alleged that illegality still existed because of Boun Oum's dependence upon US support. Souvanna still would not consider resigning until the Laotian government contained "all elements." He supported the return of the ICC, as a stop gap measure, and defended Soviet aid because it had been requested by Quinim, whom Souvanna now claimed to have appointed. (See item 12 December 60.)

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 814, 9 Jan 61;
(U) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1144, 17 Jan 61.

11 Jan The President of the French Republic received a note from the Soviet Premier accusing the US of violating the Geneva agreement, while noting favorably French support of a coalition Laotian Government. The Premier expressed Soviet support for the proposal of Sihanouk for a conference of all interested parties, and queried the French President upon his attitude towards such a conference.

(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 2907, 13 Jan 61.

11 Jan In a memorandum to the JCS the Chairman, JCS, stated that as a result of briefings on Laos given to Mr. McNamara and Mr. Rusk, there existed the possibility that the JCS might soon be requested to provide comprehensive recommendations designed "to bring conditions in Laos to a satisfactory level." In anticipation of such a request, the Chairman recommended that the JCS take, as a matter of urgency, the following actions:

1) That CINCPAC be directed to review all current actions to improve the effectiveness of operations in Laos and to make any further recommendations for additional actions that could contribute to the early achievement of a satisfactory situation in Laos. CINCPAC was to assume that the US would provide "all necessary funds, resources, and energetic support" to implement his recommendations; further, CINCPAC was to consolidate current and additional recommended actions and submit them to the JCS by 18 January 1961 (see item 18 January 61).

2) That the Joint Staff, JCS, re-examine the situation in Laos and provide recommendations on political-military actions in support of the recommendations which would be forthcoming from CINCPAC.

(The JCS approved the recommendations of the Chairman on 13 January 61; on the same day CINCPAC was directed to take the action recommended by the Chairman.)

(TS) JCS 1992/897, 12 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/9105
(11 Jan 61).

11 Jan According to the cable from the US Military Attache in Vientiane, the first T-6 sorties of the fledgling Laotian combat air force resulted in "jammed guns, unspent rockets, and aborts."

The attache also reported that he had been approached at Saigon by the commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force, with an offer to fly AD-6 strike missions in Laos. These flights already had been planned by the Vietnamese Air Force, and would be carried out by volunteer pilots, provided that President Diem approved. The Vietnamese commander also had urged the attache to contact the US Ambassador in order to have the ambassador secure this approval.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to Hq USAF, DA IN 74195, 11 Jan 61; (S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 74501, 12 Jan 61.

- 12 Jan CINCPAC instructed CINCPACFLT and CINCPACAF to provide one experienced fighter-bomber pilot each for temporary duty with the PEO Laos. These pilots were to function as advisers to the Laotian Air Force on T-6 tactics.
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT and PACAF, DA IN 74609, 13 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 76176, 18 Jan 61.
- 12 Jan The Canadian views on the reactivation of the ICC were made known to Ambassador Whitney by the British government. The Canadians agreed to participate within the following frame of reference:
1. The ICC representatives would try to ascertain the facts of the current Laotian situation;
 2. The representatives would work for a "cease fire";
 3. The representatives would report their findings to the Geneva co-chairmen and the ICC governments, and would recommend for or against continued ICC participation in Laotian affairs.
- (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2828, 12 Jan 61.
- 12 Jan Ambassador Brown warned the State Department that any policy which envisioned Souvanna's participation in the Boun Oum Government would be regarded by the Laotian Government as "tantamount to betrayal," inasmuch as the Boun Oum regime had come to regard Souvanna as the epitome of all that they were struggling against.
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1327, 12 Jan 61.
- 12-13 Jan CHPEO, responding to CINCPAC's warning of the "urgent necessity to create a respectable capability" for the Laotian Air Force, "agreed to accept" six additional T-6's thus raising the number of Laotian T-6's to a projected total of 10. CHPEO reported, however, that Phoumi had on hand only 10 first line pilots; since four of these were already integrated into the T-6 program, there were only six pilots available to fly the FAL's eight C-47's. On 13 January CINCPAC replied to CHPEO that in view of the critical shortage of pilots reported by CHPEO, CINCPAC was considering recommending the immediate establishment of an accelerated pilot training program in Thailand for FAL trainees. This program envisaged two to three weeks of ground training, followed by 30-40 hours flight training in light aircraft and 20-30 hours transition to T-6's.
- [REDACTED]
- (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, DA IN 74021, 11 Jan 61 and DA IN 74742, 13 Jan 61; (TS) Msg, CHPEO to CINCPAC DA IN 74448, 12 Jan 61
- 13 Jan CINCPAC authorized the Chief, PEO, to attach PEO personnel to FAL units in order to: a) advise and support FAL commanders in operational and logistical matters down to the battalion level; b) assist in the establishment and operation of aerial resupply of FAL forces down to the battalion level; and c) establish unilateral US communications down to the FAL battalion level with the US Communications Control, Vientiane. At the same time, PEO personnel were forbidden to operate forward of FAL battalions in disputed areas or behind insurgent lines for any purposes.
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO, DA IN 74694, 13 Jan 61.

13 Jan Ambassador Johnson warned the Secretary of State that SEATO morale was at a low ebb, and that the organization might be fatally discredited unless some early action was taken to persuade the Asian members that SEATO could play a useful role in the Laotian crisis. The Ambassador submitted a draft SEATO communique that 1) pledged SEATO cooperation in seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis, 2) recognized Communist interference in support of the rebel forces, and 3) noted that some SEATO members had been asked for assistance by the RLC. He urged the Department to attempt to secure UK and French cooperation in issuing this "minimum action" which might restore some faith in SEATO. He also summed up other advantages accruing from such a statement: it would put the Communists on notice of SEATO intentions and would strengthen Boun Oum's Government in future international discussions.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1240, 13 Jan 61.

14 Jan Ambassador Brown forwarded to the Secretary of State the text of a Laotian note to the French. This note requested that the French completely replace the personnel of the FMM, in order to "recover the former happy harmony" of Franco-Lao relations.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1340, 14 Jan 61.

14 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS, using the arguments and language of CINCPAC (see item 16 December 60), urged that the Secretary recommend to the Secretary of State as an urgent matter:

(a) the removal of political restrictions on U.S. military assistance to Laos;

(b) that the United States assume direct responsibility for the FAL training program; and

(c) the early establishment of a legitimate MAAG in Laos.

In their memorandum the JCS also called to the Secretary's attention the fact that they had long been on record in favor of the establishment in Laos of a regular MAAG staffed with uniformed personnel.

(S) JCSM-6-61, derived from JCS 1992/890, 14 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/4060 (16 Dec 60).

14 Jan In a long memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS set forth their conclusions and recommended certain US courses of action in Laos. Gravely concerned by the deteriorating situation in Laos, the JCS had concluded that the US "must take immediate and decisive actions to defeat the aggressors in Laos or face the possibility of a neutral or Communist dominated South-east Asia." Should Laos fall to the aggressors, the Communists would be in a position to dominate Cambodia and outflank the defenses of both Thailand and Vietnam.

Fortunately, the recent formation of the Boun Oum/Phoumi provisional government had provided the US with its best opportunity to act since the Kong Le coup of August 1960. It was the view of the JCS that expanded US support, both overt and covert, of the provisional

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government would probably make it possible for the Boun Oum/Phoumi leadership to secure the minimum objectives of continuing to stay in power and of maintaining control of the principal population and communication centers.

From the military point of view the only solution to the problem of insurgency in Laos, said the JCS, was to equip and train Lao forces capable of maintaining internal security without the intervention of non-Laotian military forces.

The JCS recommended that the Secretary of Defense seek US governmental approval of the following goals: "As a minimum goal the United States should take any action necessary to enable the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government to maintain control of the principal population and communications centers in Laos. The ultimate goal of the United States should be the development of a viable government, friendly to the United States, and in complete control of Laos."

The JCS also recommended that the Secretary seek US governmental approval for the implementation of the following "immediate and positive" steps:

- (1) Establish a legitimate MAAG in Laos to boost the morale of the FAL and to clearly indicate U.S. intent to fully support the legal government. Equipment should be furnished with respect to requirements and the MAAG should be manned in sufficient strength to assure full and proper utilization of this equipment.

- (2) Take over direct responsibility for the FAL training program after an open MAAG is in operation.

The JCS also recommended, finally, that the Secretary seek approval for the following course of action:

The United States Government should continue to make every effort to obtain agreement within SEATO for the recognition and support of the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government. Further, the United States Government, at the appropriate time under the Terms of Article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, should take action to obtain agreement within SEATO for the introduction of a SEATO force into Laos and the implementation of MPO Plan 5/60, should indications develop that the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government cannot cope with the Communist threat. However, it must be recognized that there is considerable doubt that the Western members of SEATO will agree to such action, and thus SEATO action cannot be depended upon. In the event unanimous SEATO agreement cannot be reached, and action cannot be taken by SEATO as such, the United States should press for agreement by as

many of those nations as possible to intervene in accordance with the principles of SEATO.

Among other things, the JCS stated in their memorandum that:

1) The US should not for the time being take the initiative to bring about UN intervention or the reestablishment of the ICC in Laos.

2) US unilateral intervention should be initiated only after reasonable efforts to secure SEATO or multilateral support had failed, and when circumstances required such intervention to attain minimum US objectives.

3) Should unilateral US or SEATO intervention take place, the US should take "appropriate increased readiness measures" concurrent with the intervention in order to indicate the determination of the US "to insure an anti-Communist Laos."

The JCS attached to their memorandum a ten page "Evaluation of Major Courses of Action" in Laos. (See item 19 January 61.) (On 6 February the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman, JCS that the proposal of the JCS for establishing a MAAG in Laos had been considered by State and Defense and it had been decided to hold the proposal "in abeyance.") (TS) JCSM-13-61, derived from JCS 1992/894, 14 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/9105 (30 Dec 60).

14 Jan CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the Vietnamese offer of AD-6 strikes in Laos be accepted (see item 11 January 61). In making his recommendation, CINCPAC pointed out that 1) T-6s were "probably" not adequate to achieve the "number one" objective of halting the Soviet airlift; 2) [REDACTED] and 3) Phoumi had requested Vietnam to make available to him a light tactical air squadron with Lao insignia. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 142055Z Jan 61.

14 Jan CHJUSMAG Thailand furnished to CINCPAC an interim reply to CINCPAC's query regarding pilot training for Laotians (see item 12 January 61). [REDACTED]

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 75333, 14 Jan 61

14 Jan Phoumi reversed his decision of 11 January (see item 10-11 January 61) and agreed to the direct supply of Meo irregulars by the US. (On 17 January, [REDACTED] rice and ammunition had been airdropped to the Meo forces.) [REDACTED]

14 Jan Supporting the Indian initiative of 7 January 1961 (see item), the British began coordinating with the State Department the composition of a note to the USSR. The note would be designed to secure Soviet cooperation

in a request to the Indian Government for the reconvening of the ICC in Laos. (See item 21 January 61.)

(S) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL 1020, 14 Jan 61.

14 Jan

The Secretary of State informed US diplomats of "the general concept upon which we have been proceeding" in Laos. The Secretary reiterated that the overriding US objective remained the independence and territorial integrity of Laos. To achieve this objective, however, the Secretary delineated three planes of action-- Laotian domestic politics, military and international-- as follows:

1) Domestic politics in Laos. On this plane the US objectives had been the legitimation of Boun Oum Government and bringing it to a realization of the international consequences of its actions - and thus the importance of dealing prudently with its own problems, with other countries (including France), and with the international press. The US had also counseled the RLG to accept a position of "non-alignment" and an ultimate broadening of its political base. Non-alignment meant an independent Laos able to maintain its territorial integrity and immune from charges that it was being used as an "advanced base" by either East or West. The basic purpose of this action was to break the legal cover for Bloc intervention, to strengthen the RLG's international position, and to create a more favorable climate for necessary US actions. The US had only been partially successful in this area.

2) Military. The US had sought to meet the RLG request for MAP assistance and "to maximize the effectiveness of Phoumi's forces," but had exercised restraint in the hope that the present level of support would be sufficient to enable the FAL to contain the military threat and eventually reduce it to a low-scale guerrilla insurgency. Another basic objective was to eliminate Bloc support to the rebels. Above all, the US was attempting to limit outside support to avoid an "escalation process" whereby the local war might get out of control. The US hoped to convince the Bloc that it was firm in its defense of Laos, but not at the cost of gaining an international reputation for recklessness.

3) International. The US was attempting to provide a framework for a multilateral approach which would result in the termination of hostilities and continued support of the RLG by Western and Asian countries. In dealing with various proposals advanced for international investigation and negotiation of the crisis, however, the US must be careful to avoid any international scheme whose terms of reference would naively equate the RLG and the Pathet Lao, or seek to solve the situation by terminating Western assistance to the RLG. Currently, while avoiding outright rejection of the ICC, the US expected the British-Indian plan to collapse, hopefully with the onus on the USSR. The US was also considering possible graduated action in SEATO or with certain SEATO members in order to give new life to SEATO.

The US expected no early resolution of the Lao crisis, the Secretary warned, and it did not exclude consideration of any of the various international courses of action which had been or might be proposed.

(S) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL 1018, 14 Jan 61.

- 14 Jan Reacting to reports from Taipei that President Chiang had dispatched an envoy to Vientiane to coordinate the activities of Nationalist irregulars in Burma with Phoumi forces, the Secretary of State ordered Ambassador Brown to inform the Laotian Government that the US was strongly opposed to any Nationalist military activities in Laos.
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 764, 14 Jan 61.
- 16 Jan Neither the British nor the Indian reply to Sihanouk's 14-nation conference proposal (see item 1 January 61) expressed any objection to the plan, but both governments favored the reactivation of the ICC as a quicker and simpler program. (On 26 January 61, the US Embassy in Paris learned that the Canadian reply would parallel the British and Indian notes.)
(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2889, 20 Jan 61; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3017, 30 Jan 61; AP, 16 Jan 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 858, 15 Jan 61.
- 16 Jan The US Embassy at New Delhi learned that Nehru in recent days had termed it "nonsense to speak of [Souvanna] Phouma Government, no one can find it."
(S) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1454, 16 Jan 61.
- 16 Jan The President of the French Republic today replied to the recent note from the Soviet Premier (see item 11 January 61). While agreeing that there could be numerous criticisms of the present situation, the French President did not support the Premier's castigations of the US; but he did suggest the Pathet Lao refusal to be peacefully integrated into Laotian politics counterpoised any foment stirred by western powers. The President stated that the French were primarily interested in the reactivation of the ICC as a short-term measure for the cessation of hostilities; the President did not commit himself to the Sihanouk proposal beyond stating that it merited "serious study."
(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2885, 20 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2901, 21 Jan 61.
- 17 Jan In a memorandum to the JCS the CNO requested that the JCS approve and forward to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum recommending that the Secretary "obtain, in coordination with the Secretary of State, high level approval" for the acceptance and implementation of the Vietnamese offer of AD-6 aircraft for operations in Laos (see item 11 January 61). The CNO felt that this step was necessary because the Soviet logistical airlift into Laos continued to buildup the Pathet Lao capability to repulse forces of the Royal Lao Government, and the AT-6's recently introduced in Laos possessed only a limited capability of inhibiting Soviet airlift operations. (By N/H of JCS 1992/898, 26 January 61, the CNO Memorandum was withdrawn.)
(TS) JCS 1992/898, 17 Jan 61, JMF 9155.2/9105 (14 Jan 61).

17 Jan CINCPAC requested CHPEO to effect a plan for the skilled intelligence debriefing of CAT crews operating in Laos. CINCPAC observed that these crews were valuable sources of operational intelligence and suggested that qualified debriefers be stationed at Pakse, Vientiane, Savannakhet, and Luang Prabang (see item 27 January 61).
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 172342Z Jan 61.

18 Jan The US after "earnest consideration," rejected Cambodia's 14-nation conference proposal (see item 1 January 61). Noting that serious doubts were entertained by several of the nations concerned, the US stated its preference for a political solution in Laos, and emphasized that this reply did not foreclose US approval of international conference generally.

During the past week, the four Bloc members included in Sihanouk's 14-nation conference--USSR, North Vietnam, Communist China, and Poland--had given their assent to the proposal.

(C) Msg, SecState CIRCTEL 1070, 20 Jan 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 383, 13 Jan 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 881, 19 Jan 61; AP, 11, 12, 15, and 18 Jan 61.

18 Jan At the request of the JCS, CINCPAC outlined at great length the amount and composition of US military assistance to Laos since the establishment of the Boun Oum Government. The US was currently supporting a Laotian force of 58,800, including 29,000 FAL regulars. At the same time, although some relaxation of alert status had occurred, major units of CINCPAC's forces were ready to execute CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59.

In conclusion, CINCPAC urged certain courses of action in order to bring about "a early, dramatic, sizeable reversal of the present trend." These courses of action included: 1) augmentation of Laotian air support capability by increasing the RLG airforce, freeing B-26's--now on stand-by--for operations in Laos, and converting three infantry battalions to parachute battalions; 2) institution of a large-scale bounty system to encourage the capture of non-Laotian enemy and destruction of heavy PL equipment; 3) provision of a regularly constituted MAAG for Laos operating down to the company level; and 4) securing some overt expression of serious SEATO concern over Laos.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, DA IN 76176, 18 Jan 61.

18 Jan CHPEO advised CINCPAC that the T-6's were proving ineffective against the Soviet aircraft because of their lack of speed. To CHPEO it appeared that the priority targets for the T-6's should be troops, gun positions, supply dumps, and similar fixed targets. To make the aircraft effective against such targets, CHPEO recommended that the restrictions on the use of bombs be lifted (see item 7 January 61).

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 76274, 18 Jan 61.

18 Jan CINCPAC requested the JCS to issue a directive authorizing the use of bombs and napalm in Laos. He also urged that the Chief, PEO, be given a free hand to plan

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strikes and determine the priority of targets. (See item 29 January 61.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 3490, 18 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

18 Jan CINCPAC cabled CHPEO that the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres should have priority over other military efforts in Laos, and suggested a plan to achieve this purpose. The plan called for the FAL to launch, at the earliest possible time, an airborne attack by at least one battalion, combined with simultaneous ground attacks and timely airlanded reinforcements. According to CINCPAC, this plan should consider the maximum use of friendly Meo tribesmen and should assume that ample airlift (16 C-46 or equivalent aircraft) would be available.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 182251Z Jan 61.

18 Jan The JCS requested CINCPAC's views as to the feasibility and desirability of a proposal to train FAL forces in Thailand under US supervision. This proposal was offered, said the JCS, because of the seriousness of the Pathet Lao threat and the need to avoid the time-consuming Franco-American training procedures in Laos made necessary by the Geneva Accords.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 983936, 18 Jan 61.

18-19 Jan CHPEO, commenting upon the proposed FAL pilot training program (see item 12 January 61), reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had been receptive to the idea [REDACTED] Phoumi's plan, according to CHPEO, was to select the 20 most eligible persons, with final screening to produce 12 trainees.

[REDACTED]

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 76378, 18 Jan 61; (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JUSMAG Thailand, 192211Z Jan 61.

19 Jan

[REDACTED]

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1271, 19 January 61).

19 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense Gates stated that despite the impending change in Administration, he believed the "rapidly deteriorating

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situation" in Laos would admit of no delay. He posited that the US must either undertake increased military measures in Laos or face the possibility of a Communist dominated Southeast Asia. As an immediate objective in the furtherance of the long range US goal of independence and territorial integrity for Laos, he submitted that the increase of the size, scope, and authority of the PEO had to be achieved in order to enable the Houn Oum/Phoumi Government to regain undisputed control of the principal population and communication centers in Laos.

The Secretary of Defense submitted this proposal as an interim measure and urged the creation of a MAAG "as soon as politically feasible." To supplement this interim measure, he suggested that the US: 1) continue its effort to secure the widest possible recognition and support of the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government; and 2) seek agreement within SEATO for the introduction of a SEATO force into Laos should it appear that the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government could not cope with the Communist threat. If this SEATO action could not be obtained, the Secretary suggested that the US seek a similar agreement with as many SEATO countries as possible for multilateral intervention. If the pace of events precluded either political action, the Secretary of Defense foresaw that unilateral intervention by the US might be a "necessary prerequisite to obtaining the desired multilateral response." (See item 14 January 61.)

(The Secretary of Defense furnished a copy of this letter to Mr. McNamara and recommended that the Secretary of State provide this information to Mr. Rusk.)

(TS) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/894, 27 Jan 61, JMF Laos.

19 Jan The US Ambassador in Moscow cabled the Department of State information that a Soviet official had admitted that the USSR, in formulating Laotian policy, was obliged to deal with the West on one hand, and the Chinese on the other. The report of this Chinese pressure upon the Soviets was given further substance by a report from London on the following day that expressed the British belief that, unless prospects for an international conference brightened, the Soviets would have to accede to this Chinese pressure.

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1659, 18 Jan 61; (C) Msg, London to SecState, 2918, 19 Jan 61.

19 Jan In a series of messages, Ambassador Houghton described the French reaction to Phoumi's renewed agitation for the replacement of French military personnel (see item 14 January 61).

While the French were not unwilling to negotiate differences with Laos, they resented being forced to do so. Any withdrawal which the French would be obliged to undertake would be interpreted by the French as a violation of the Geneva agreement, rather than of the bilateral Franco-Laos military agreement of 1953. Such an attitude by the French would pose grave legal problems for the continued presence of American military advisors in Laos, since these advisors were permitted in Laos

only under the "umbrella" of the FMM (see introduction and item 16 December 60). Moreover, if Phoumi forced such a situation, the French would construe the move to have the sufferance of the US. The French course of action for the present was to procrastinate, in the belief that Phoumi could not force the French out and that France's allies would prevent Phoumi from presenting any ultimata.

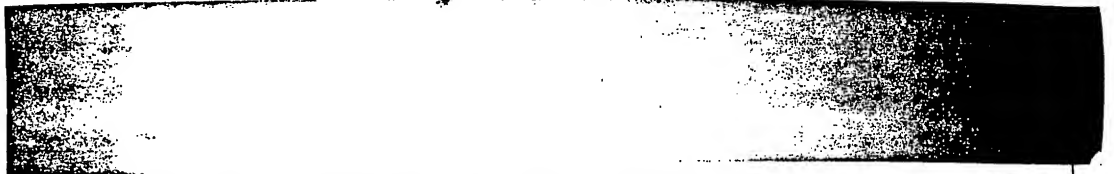
On the same day Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State the views expressed by Phoumi on the same subject in interviews of 18 January and 19 January. Phoumi did not wish to sever relations with the French, but he did intend to "make his mark," to impress upon the French his feeling that many Frenchmen in the country were imbued with anti-Phoumi attitudes. Phoumi did not intend to push the French too closely, although he did plan to ask for the replacement of French diplomatic personnel if he did not receive an early reply to his request for the replacement of military personnel. (See item 26 January 61).

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2831, 17 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2851, 18 Jan 61; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 2877, 19 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1359, 18 Jan 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1367, 19 Jan 61.

19 Jan The junction of Routes 7 and 13 were retaken by Pathet Lao forces attacking from the east (see item 10 January 61), according to the JCS Laos Situation Report. The FAL withdrawal from the crossroads was orderly, however, and FAL forces based at Luang Prabang were planning to counterattack.

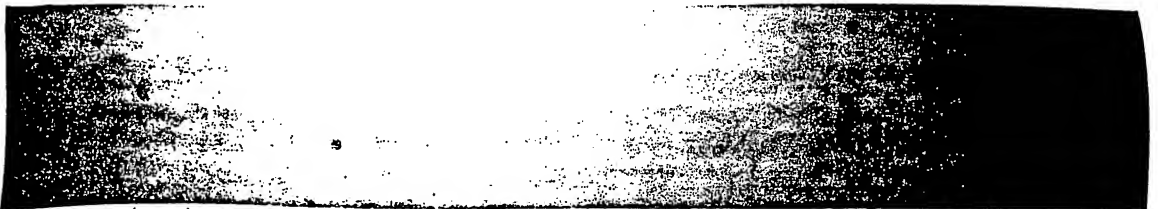
(TS) JCS Laos 16/61 (19 Jan 61), 9155.2/9108 (61), R&RA.

20 Jan



(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 20234Z Jan 61.

20 Jan



(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 200451Z Jan 61.

20 Jan

CHPEO informed CINCPAC that 115 Filipino technicians would be requested for the fiscal 1962 Military Training Program for Laos to perform support functions for the FAL as follows:

1) Twenty-two technicians to meet the extraordinary demands upon all logistics advisory functions. These demands arose from the disorganization of the FAL wrought by the 9 August coup, the subsequent fighting, and the defection to or capture by Kong Le of FAL technical personnel.

2) Twenty-four technicians to provide the training necessary to return to serviceability the considerable

quantity of unusable FAL equipment.

3) Twenty technicians to replace key members of the French Military Mission (FMM), whom the FAL intended to remove.

4) Forty-nine technicians to replace FMM advisors to the Laotian Air Force.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 77299, 21 Jan 61.

21 Jan

At a State-Defense meeting attended by five Department of State representatives, one CIA representative, Mr. Paul Nitze and Colonel W. S. McCrea of OSD/ISA, and Colonel D. C. Pollock, J-5, JCS, future US policies in Laos were discussed; the conferees, less Colonels McCrea and Pollock, agreed that Mr. G. McGhee of the Department of State would "put together a single policy and course of action paper to serve as the basis of recommendations to Mr. Rusk and the President (see items 22 and 23 January 61). In a memorandum for the record, Colonel Pollock listed the type of questions the Chairman, JCS, might expect at future meetings of the inter-departmental group. According to this memorandum the conferees discussed four major courses of action; these were as follows; 1. strengthening the FAL, 2. response by SEATO, 3. [establishment of a] Neutral Nations Commission in Laos, and 4. direct approach to the USSR."

The memorandum also listed significant points discussed at the meeting and the "primary methods of strengthening the RLC military situation."

(TS) Memo for Rcd, Col D.C. Pollock, USMC, J-5, JCS, "State-Defense Meeting on Courses of Action in Laos," 21 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

21 Jan

The British Ambassador to Moscow handed to the Soviet Government a British proposal for Soviet-British action, as Geneva co-Chairmen, inviting India as ICC Chairman to reconvene the ICC for Laos (see items 7 and 14 January 61). In their proposal the British also suggested a joint declaration, including the following:

. . . the two co-chairmen are agreed in requesting you to appoint a representative to go to Laos as soon as possible on an exploratory mission to propose to the King of Laos that the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos should reconvene with the duties set out below, and to ascertain, in accordance with the constitutional processes of Laos, whether this proposal would be acceptable.

The duties would be:

- a. to ascertain the facts of the present situation and to contribute to the restoration of peace in Laos, and;
- b. to recommend to the co-chairmen and to the Governments represented on the International Commission whether the International Commission can usefully function in order to help maintain the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Laos and prevent any interference in the internal

affairs of Laos, as envisaged in paragraph 12 of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference.

On 18 January, the Department of State had commented extensively on the various "identifiable national viewpoints" in the already approved text. The phrase "on an exploratory mission to propose to King of Laos" was a compromise which contained both the Canadian view that the feasibility of the return of the ICC had to be established, and the British view that the Russians would consider any ICC mission only if the mission dealt with the King, rather than with the Boun Oum regime.

The clause "in accordance with the constitutional processes of Laos" was a safeguard, required by the US, to insure that the ICC would be automatically referred to the Boun Oum Government by the King. Furthermore, the US insisted that the Indians be informed explicitly that the US expected the Indian representative to deal in fact only with the Boun Oum Government. (As of 31 January 1961 the USSR had made no reply to the UK note.)

(S) Msgs, SecState CIRCTEL, 1020, 14 Jan 61, 1039, 17 Jan 61, 1051, 18 Jan 61; NYT, 24 Jan 61, 2.

22 Jan

A State-Defense meeting was held "to effect a final coordination on a paper to be presented to the President forming the basis of policy in Laos for the new Administration" (see item 23 January 61). The participants included, among other, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chairman of the JCS, Major General Bonesteel, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy. After detailed discussion of many facets of the Laotian question, Mr. Rusk summarized his views, according to the memorandum for the record of a participant, "in this manner":

a. Step up the support of Phoumi, as much as possible, short of committing the U.S. flag. (This leaves open the matter of using aircraft of other nations - but also leaves open the use of U.S. aircraft).

b. Pursue the diplomatic possibility of some sort of a neutralized Laos, preventing any thrust to the south and pushing back anti-government forces north as in Geneva Accords. This Laos would be a buffer, but not dominated by the communists.

c. Take some action to reassure the active members of SEATO that any problem in Laos has no relation to what we do for them in event they got into trouble.

General Lemnitzer and General Bonesteel recommended, then, that:

a. Steps be taken to lift financial restrictions and get it out of the routine.

b. Positive action be taken, concurrently, on support for RTG and GVN such as giving Sarit 2 RCT's and Diem his additional 20,000 men. men.

c. Exercise care that it does not look as though U.S. was rushing into a proposal from a position of weakness in regard to the neutral nations commission.

At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Rusk, after discussing the briefing that was to be given to the President on the next day (see item 23 January 61), stated that "the group should know":

a. What the President would have to do to break the log jam?

b. How quickly and quietly we would interdict the airlift?

(TS) Memo for Rcd, Col D. C. Pollock, J-5, JCS "State-Defense Meeting on Courses of Action in Laos," 22 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

22-23
Jan

In a letter to the Secretary General of SEATO, Premier Boun Oum requested SEATO assistance against "Communist interference in the domestic affairs of Laos." The letter outlined the extent of Communist support of the rebels. It requested "as a preliminary measure preceding any direct intervention" that SEATO establish a commission of inquiry in Vientiane to investigate the presence of Bloc war materials and foreign Communist elements in Laos. "The RLG would then have no recourse" the letter continued, but to ask for the assistance of SEATO "whose beneficial action would, without doubt, be of great help to it."

On the following day the SEATO Council of Representatives met to discuss the Laotian appeal. The Thai representative claimed that "since the appeal [was] made formally it is within the terms of the treaty, must be considered and necessary steps be taken to try to comply with request." The UK and French representatives agreed with Ambassador Johnson who presented the US position: the US regretted that the RLG had made the appeal without prior consultation and the US in no way accepted the implication that sending a commission would commit SEATO to direct intervention. The US Ambassador did admit, however, that the substance of the Laotian charges "well corresponded to the facts as we know them." He informed the representatives that the letter of the RLG might make the USSR more receptive to a "reasonable attitude" on the ICC in view of its aversion to SEATO involvement in Laos.

Ambassador Johnson reported that all the representatives emphasized "that any substantive reply to the RLG must make perfectly clear that SEATO could not accept implication that sending mission would be 'preliminary' to direct intervention."

(C) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1287, 23 Jan 61 and 1288, 23 Jan 61.

23 Jan

In a "preliminary memorandum" to the Secretary of Defense the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) detailed the discussion at the White House meeting on the report by the State-Defense-CIA Task Force on Laos (see item 23 January). The conference, attended by the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chairman of the JCS, and others, devoted most of its discussion to

the recommendations of the Task Force report which were divided into two groups: "A. Courses of Action to Improve Military Situation"; and "B. Diplomatic Actions Vis-A-Vis the Soviet Government."

The Task Group recommended, under actions to be taken immediately (Phase 1), that the following military courses of action be approved and that CINCPAC be authorized to decide the timing of their implementation:

"a. [REDACTED]

"b. [REDACTED]

"c. Use of PEO personnel (expanded members, if necessary) as tactical advisers to FAL units, ostensibly as training advisers.

"d. Make use of 'silver bullets' and bounty.

"e. Establish a small U.S. logistic support group in Thailand.

"f. Augment U.S. airlift in SEA in support of RLG either with contract aircraft (CAT) or USAF aircraft.

"g. Substantial augmentation of FAL airlift by contract (20 H-34s or 43s), improved observation (3 high altitude helicopters), employment non-Lao commercial pilots and augmentation Filipino technicians.

"h. Improve SEATO intelligence collection agency.

"i. Make available to CINCPAC and CHPEO (1) necessary funds to cover existing deficit from past operations, (2) funds required urgently for current operations (3) a 'drawing account' of ten million dollars from which to meet special requirements."

Under possible additional military actions (Phase 2) the report listed the following:

"a. [REDACTED]

"b. [REDACTED]

"c. Preparation for commitment of U.S. aircraft if CHICOMS start fighter escort of airlift.

"d. [REDACTED]

"e. Removal of restriction on use of bombs and napalm by AT6's.

"f. [REDACTED]

The Task force recommended a., b., and c., above for immediate action by the JCS, but expressed its

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belief that the "military advantages, which would lie in the possibility of shooting down Soviet airlift, does not outweigh political disadvantages."

The Task Force recommended no diplomatic action be taken immediately (Phase I). Under "Possible future diplomatic action," however, the group recommended that under certain specified circumstances a direct approach should be made to the USSR urging that "Laos be made a test base of the ability of our two governments to work together toward peaceful objectives."

[REDACTED]

Also under possible future diplomatic action, the Task Force recommended that the US might hold bilateral discussions with SEATO members concerning a SEATO program of action which would include the following steps:

"(1) Visit by SEATO Secretary General to Laos, who would report findings to SEATO with copy to UN.

"(2) Holding of a publicly announced SEATO Council meeting to examine the nature of Communist intervention in Laos.

"(3) Stationing, subject to Thai's request, of U.S. military unit (probably a battle group and an air squadron) at Ehorat. This unit to fly SEATO flag. If members agree."

Still under possible future diplomatic action, the group recommended that the US might explore first with Laos and Cambodia, then with other allies the establishment of a neutral commission. The Group's report envisioned King Vathana inviting Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to form a neutral commission. According to the report, the commission's terms of reference might include recommendations for a cease fire, the regrouping of rival forces in the positions described in the Geneva Accord, and amnesty, the end of outside provision of supplies, a broadening of the Laotian Government, and "possibly," free elections.

Finally, the Task Force recommended that the US might in the future put "Direct Pressure on Our Allies for Solidarity" through messages "emphasizing the importance the new Administration places on concerted action in face of growing general threat and specifically urging coordinated support of the RLG."

In the White House discussion the Secretary of Defense stated that the recommended actions to be taken at once to improve the military situation (a. through i. above), though helpful, would not reverse the unfavorable long range prospects in Laos. The Secretary also "pointed up the issue" of the militarily desirable interdiction of the Soviet airlift by means of the "possible additional military actions" (a. through c., above), versus the Department of State's concern that

these actions "would greatly impair" the prospects for political negotiations. The Secretary of State replied that, although he would not reject these three additional military actions, before undertaking these actions he wanted, first to arrive at a strategic appreciation of the general problem of security in Southeast Asia with the UK and France, and then "talk to the USSR." The Secretary of State also held the view that the US should increase its support of Thailand and Vietnam, and seek the creation of a composite SEATO force.

Referring to i., above, the Secretary of State pointed out the "great disparity between risks we may run into in Southeast Asia and amounts of money involved in these matters": he expressed the hope that the President would authorize the Department of State to arrive at more flexible arrangements for these matters, and the President agreed.

According to the "preliminary memorandum, the President expressed concern at the weakness of the local situation in Laos coupled with the weakness of allied support for our position. He proposed that, if the British and French aren't going to do anything about the security of Southeast Asia, we tell them we aren't going to do it alone. They have as much or more to lose in the area than we have." General Lemnitzer emphasized the great importance of Laos to the security of Southeast Asia and to US relations with US allies in the area.

In the discussion which followed it was the "impression, confirmed by a call to McGeorge Bundy," of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) that the Department of Defense was "authorized, but not directed," to carry out the immediate military actions a. through i., above, which "continue to appear to be wise after further detailed exploration." Among these measures, however, c. was subject to State and Defense Department clarification of the legal status of the PEO personnel engaged as tactical advisers to FAL units, and to clearance with the French in Laos.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Secretary of State summarized the diplomatic steps to be taken as follows: First, the US should consult with its principal allies in an attempt to arrive at a common strategic appreciation; meanwhile, the ICC "manuever," initiated by the UK should be permitted to run its course; at the same time, the US should prepare to attempt the neutral commission approach "which might perhaps be adopted to meet a move in the United Nations with respect to the Laotian question;" also at the same time, the US should be exploring measures to bring about joint SEATO action and, possibly, the creation of a SEATO commission.

(TS) Memo, ASD/ISA to SecDef, 1-18062/61, 23 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

23 Jan The President approved the "immediate military and paramilitary proposals" outlined in paragraphs a. through i. of the State-Defense-CIA Task Force report. (See item 23 January, immediately above.) It was the President's understanding, however, that "increased activity by American military personnel would be authorized only

in the light of advice from Vientiane." (See paragraph c. under military courses of action to be undertaken at once, in item 23 January, immediately above.) Furthermore, political negotiations and proposals were to be "left in the hands of the Secretary of State in accordance with the outline of prospective immediate steps which he presented" at the meeting. (See last paragraph of item 23 January, immediately above.)

(S) Memo, Bundy to SecState and SecDef, "Discussion on Laos in Cabinet Room, Jan 23," 23 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

23 Jan The US Ambassador in Moscow commented to the Secretary of State upon Soviet military intentions in Laos. The Ambassador reported that, while the USSR was not willing to expand its actions in Laos beyond meeting the challenge of the US, it nevertheless would not hesitate to meet any challenge the US offered in that country. The Soviets did not want the Laotian problem to assume any greater international magnitude, but any reaction of theirs would be made easier if they were able to place the onus upon the US.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1721, 23 Jan 61.

23 Jan CHJUSMAG, Thailand discounted the possibility of Thai objections to the expenditure of US funds to train FAL units in Thailand (see item 20 January 61). The Thai, said CHJUSMAG, had been scrupulous in administering funds under JUSMAG guidance during the "Erawan" project for training Lao paratroopers in Thailand.

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 231000Z Jan 61.

23 Jan CHPEO reported that on 21 January Phoumi had confided that he considered the military situation "grave." Phoumi desired to activate four additional battalions and had already started to organize one at Paksane. CHPEO had pointed out to Phoumi that additional battalions would be of little use unless properly trained; Phoumi had agreed and had requested that the PEO assume this training responsibility and commence the training of the one battalion being organized. CHPEO intended to assign one team to train this battalion. CHPEO considered that PEO could provide individual and unit training for the remaining three battalions. CHPEO concluded his discussion of the subject by recommending that the four battalions be authorized and that PEO proceed with the necessary planning.

CHPEO also reported that a PEO representative was now physically installed in Phoumi's headquarters and that Phoumi had consented to the placing of Laotian Training Advisory Groups (LTAG's) with the various Laotian battalion headquarters. CHPEO commented that this placement of US advisors would aid PEO in keeping abreast of FAL and Pathet Lao activities.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 78041, 24 Jan 61.

24 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that the Secretary seek governmental approval of 1) a minimum goal in Laos, already recommended by the JCS (see item 14 January 61), and 2) the implementation of the "Recommended Political-Military Actions in Laos" attached to their communication. Reiterating several of the statements made in their earlier memorandum

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the JCS went on to say that the Sino-Soviet Bloc would undoubtedly attempt to prevent the consolidation of the Boun Oum/Phoumi regime in Laos and to enlarge the area under Communist control. Any positive Free World action that would jeopardize minimum objectives of the Bloc in Laos would result in a Sino-Soviet reassessment of the risks entailed in Laos. It was "essential to recognize," said the JCS, that increasing the level of US activities in Laos presupposed US willingness, if necessary, "to challenge" Bloc aggression in Southeast Asia over the issue of Laos. The US must, therefore, be ready to take the steps necessary to counter such aggression. Included in these steps was preparation for overt US intervention. Appropriate increased readiness measures should be taken "now."

The JCS also called attention to adverse affects on the military situation in Laos resulting from the "unfortunate reactions and attitudes of the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government, our SEATO allies, other Free World nations, the Bloc countries and the American public." Even the US news media had been "basically critical" of the US effort in Laos. It seemed to the JCS that US was not doing enough to influence public opinion at home and abroad.

In the appendix to their memorandum the JCS stated that the recommended political-military actions provided a comprehensive list of the measures that could be taken "to bring conditions in Laos to a satisfactory level"; the list was based on comments and recommendations stemming from CINCPAC, the Services, and other agencies of the Department of Defense.

The compilation was as follows:

1) For immediate action:

a. Release of a Presidential statement making, among others, the following points:

(1) The sole US objective in Laos was a free independent and territorially intact Laos.

(2) The US did not desire to establish any military base in Laos, nor did it seek to draw Laos into any defense alliance or treaty obligation.

(3) The US aid programs for Laos were designed solely to assist that nation.

(4) The US would do all in its power to preserve the peace and integrity of Laos.

(5) The US was well aware of its obligation to Laos under SEATO.

b. 

c. 

d. Prepare for use South Vietnamese AD-6 aircraft for ground attack missions in Laos.

e. [REDACTED]

f. [REDACTED]

g. Provide aircraft capable of supporting RLG offensive in the Plaines des Jarres, and controlling air space over Laos.

h. Be prepared to provide United States air support to Laos if Soviet Bloc jet cover is provided to communist resupply activities.

i. Remove all restrictions on the use of bombs and napalm.

j. [REDACTED]

k. [REDACTED]

l. Exert continuous pressure on Phoumi and FAL to mount major partisan effort by Meo and tribal Thai groups against Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces in Xieng Khouang-Sam Neua area and permit support with Program Evaluation Office (PEO) [REDACTED]

m. Encourage Phoumi to make intensive campaign to win support Lao people and other ethnic groups utilizing all psywar and other resources available to him.

n. Establish an invigorated intelligence collection capability in Southeast Asia, with emphasis on the collection of military information to satisfy Department of Defense requirements for contingency plans.

o. Provide necessary support and assurance to Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand to encourage their immediate preparation of forces for rapid commitment to Laos if needed.

p. Provide without delay the funds required to finance the FY 60 budget deficit of \$1.1 million and allocate special contingency funds in amount 10 million dollars so operations are not conducted on "hand to mouth" basis. Such funds would permit expansion FAL forces for period emergency, equipping forces, procurement additional airlift, and installation better communication and intelligence nets.

q. Increase the prestige and personnel strength of the PEO.

r. Augment AFL air transport with enough RTG crews and aircraft to permit simultaneous drop of at least one parachute battalion.

2) For action as soon as reasonably possible:

a. Establish a tailored U.S. Logistic Support Group in Thailand.

b. Convert three infantry FAL battalions into parachute battalions.

c. Step up covert and overt military assistance to Laos, short of military intervention, to include such measures as the provision of additional helicopters through Air America.

d. Be prepared to activate new FAL units as required.

e. [REDACTED]

f. As suggested by Ambassador Johnson, obtain overt expression of serious SEATO concern in form of all or combination of following:

(i) Resolution under Article IV (2) for all feasible support and assistance, short of intervention SEATO forces, to RLG for defense its independence and territorial integrity.

(ii) Special SEATO Council meeting in accordance Article V.

(iii) Visit to Laos by SEATO Secretary General.

(iv) Visit to Laos by SEATO military "fact finding group" in response to RLG invitation.

g. Ensure forceful public information measures by all government agencies to emphasize U.S. support of RLG and to discredit communist intervention.

h. In addition to increasing the strength and prestige of the PEO, staff the rest of the Laos Country Team with personnel who will have the confidence of the Boun Oum/Phoumi government, and who have the experience, resolution and stature to ensure maximum U.S. influence over the RLG.

3) Long range actions:

a. [REDACTED]

b. Modernize the Lao Air Force.

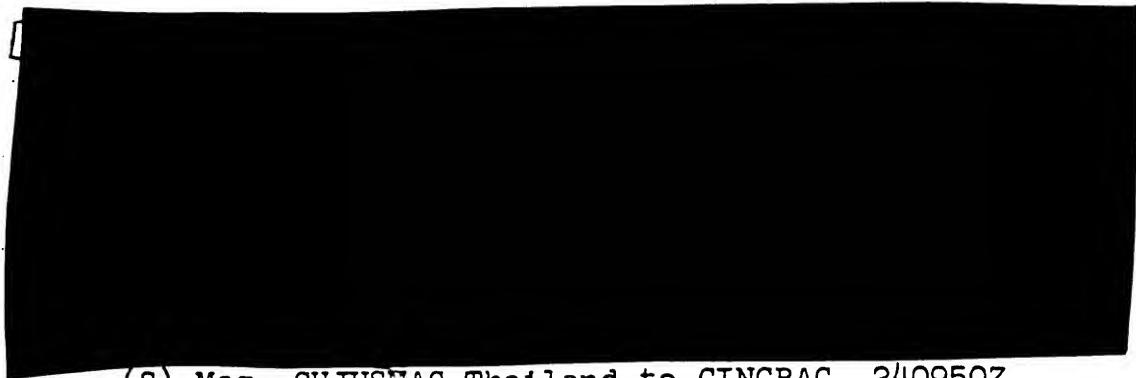
c. Augment the C-46/47 fleet now operating in Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam with C-123s

d. Establish a MAAG in Laos.

(See item 28 January 61.)

(TS) JCSM-34-61, 24 Jan 61, derived from (TS)
JCS 1992/903, JMF Laos.

24 Jan.



(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 240950Z
Jan 61.

25 Jan

At the SEATO Council of Representatives meeting to consider the appeal of the RLG (see item 22 January 61), Australia proposed the formation of an informal SEATO inquiry commission composed of the SEATO nations' ambassadors to Vientiane. This commission would investigate the Laotian charges and, if possible, reach a common assessment of the facts. At the same time, the RLG would be informed that the establishment of such a commission in no way committed SEATO to intervention in Laos, nor was it meant to prejudice current international moves, including the re-establishment of the ICC. (See item 30 January 61.)

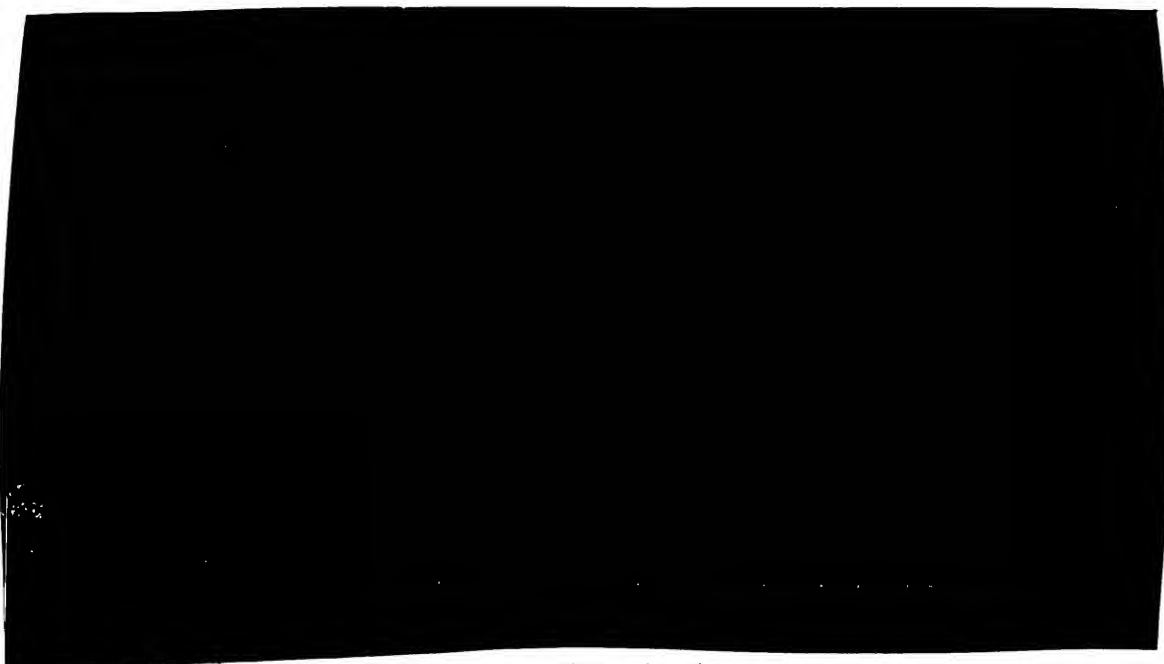
(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1301, 25 Jan 61.

26 Jan

The JCS advised CINCPAC of the courses of action approved by the President on 23 January, and authorized, at CINCPAC's discretion, the implementation of courses b., c., e., f., g., and h. [redacted] and course i. was to implemented in Washington (see item 23 January 61). The JCS cautioned CINCPAC that course c., the deployment of PEO advisors to Laotian combat units, was not to proceed beyond the guidelines that CINCPAC had set forth on 13 January (see item).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 989331, 26 Jan 61.

26 Jan



(TS) CM-71-61, 26 Jan 61; (TS) Ltr, Asst SecDef (ISA) to SecDef, X-18080/61, 31 Jan 61. Both in CJCS 091 Laos.

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26 Jan In a memorandum to the Chairman, JCS, the Director of the Joint Staff forwarded a status report on all the military courses of action concerning Laos, approved by the President.
(TS) Memo, Dir, JS to Chairman, JCS, "Status of Approved Military Courses of Action in Laos," 26 Jan 61, CJCS 091 (Laos).

26 Jan CHPEO reported Phoumi's plan for the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres to CINCPAC. The plan called for a combined air-ground attack from the west to the edge of the Plaine, with a secondary force advancing from the south to recapture Xieng Khouang city and to interdict the Xieng Khouang-Plaine des Jarres route. CHPEO characterized this plan as less bold than CINCPAC's (see item 18 January 61), but stated that it could be initiated with available resources. CHPEO recommended that Phoumi be supported in this venture, unless the US could assure Phoumi that it was prepared to support a bolder operation including air strikes and additional air transportation.
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 78761, 26 Jan 61.

26 Jan In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that the Department of Defense assume a position in support of the "continued presence" of the French Military Mission in Laos and the retention by France of the Seno Base. (The memorandum was in response to a 6 August 60 request by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) for the views of the JCS on the "attitude" the US should take if France asked the US to intercede with the Laotian Government in order to continue French title of the Seno Base.)

Judging by recent reports from Laos, said the JCS, General Phoumi seemed determined not only to do away with French control of the Seno Base but to oust the French Military Mission (FMM) as well. Moreover there were indications that France was "unwilling or unable" to face up to the rising tide of anti-French feeling in the Laotian Government. France had indicated the Seno question was just one of several problems which must be renegotiated "at the proper moment." The JCS believed that the "precipitate ouster" of the French at this time would result in grave consequences for Laos and for US objectives in the area.

The JCS recommended therefore, that the Secretary urgently seek governmental approval of the following steps:

a. Representations to France by the Department of State designed to convince the French that a compromise on their part is essential in order to forestall more drastic demands by the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government. Specifically, the French should be urged to agree to: (1) relinquish title to SENO Base in return for continued joint occupancy rights; (2) the immediate revision of the U.S.-French Memo of Understanding of 1959 concerning PEO activities which would allow the United States to assume greater control of the joint FAL training program; and, (3) the establishment of a legitimate U.S. MAAG in Laos when the

Boun Oum/Phoumi Government has been firmly established in Free World opinion.

b. Representations to the RLG by the Department of State designed to gain Lao acceptance of the measures outlined above.

(See item 29 January 61.)

(TS) JCSM-36-61, 26 Jan 61, derived from JCS 1992/399, JMF Laos.

27 Jan The US Ambassador in Cambodia reported the Thai and Burmese replies to Sihanouk's 14-nation proposal (see item 1 January 61).

Burmese Premier U Nu had not expressed opposition to the proposal, but voiced doubts about the efficacy of such a conference.

Thai Prime Minister Sarit had agreed to a conference, provided that its objectives were to:

1. stop foreign intervention;
2. safeguard against future intervention;
3. assist Laos in maintaining its unity and territorial integrity;
4. help Laos if it desires to establish free and democratic institutions.

Sihanouk had quickly accepted the Thai objectives.

(U) Msgs, Phnom Penh to SecState, 906, 23 Jan 61; 952, 29 Jan 61; 959, 31 Jan 61.

27 Jan CHPEO, Laos informed CINCPAC that Phoumi had agreed to the training of three of the four new FAL infantry battalions (see item 23 January 61)

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 79385, 27 Jan 61.

27 Jan CHPEO advised CINCPAC that the Intelligence MTT was debriefing CAT aircrews on an ad hoc basis at Vientiane and Luang Prabang (see item 17 January 61). CHPEO noted that this urgent requirement upon the MTT was preventing it from fulfilling completely its primary mission of developing intelligence capability within the FAL; CHPEO foresaw a need for additional combat intelligence personnel.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 272000Z Jan 61.

27 Jan The Government of Laos admitted that it had cried "wolf" in alleging a North Vietnamese invasion (see item 2 January 61). A Laotian official said that this ruse was meant as internal propaganda to convince the Laotian people that the Boun Oum Government had international support.

NYT, 27 Jan 61, 1.

28 Jan Ambassador Brown secured from the Laotian Government approval of an exploratory approach to the King by the Indian ICC mission. (See items 7, 9, and 21 January 61.)
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1442, 28 Jan 61.

28 Jan Prince Sihanouk expressed, in a letter to President Kennedy, his continued hope that a 14-nation conference would be held (see item 1 January 61) in line with Thai objectives (see item 27 January 61).

The effect of this letter, according to the US Ambassador to Cambodia, was to "put onus for success or failure his 14-Nation Conference proposal squarely on US."

(U) Msgs, Phnom Penh to SecState, 955, 29 Jan 61, 956, 30 Jan 61.

28 Jan The Secretary of Defense provided the Secretary of State with an extract of the memorandum on Laos sent by the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on 24 January 61 (see item) and a copy of the two enclosures to that memorandum. In his covering letter the Secretary of Defense stated that, while the "Interdepartmental Task Group on Laos" had been working on the paper subsequently considered at the White House Conference of 23 January (see item), the JCS had also been engaged in studying the Laotian problem. The JCS had recommended, said the Secretary, a "'minimum goal'" and the implementation of many specific actions concerning Laos. The minimum goal was "substantially in accord" with the goal approved at the White House Conference and "appear[ed]" to call for no further consideration. The recommended courses of action, however, had not been "specifically considered" at the Conference of 23 January. The Secretary recommended, therefore, that the Interdepartmental Task Group on Laos be reconvened to study "these proposals with a view to recommending approval, disapproval or reference to the President, as appropriate."

(TS) N/H JCS 1992/903, 2 Feb 61.

29 Jan In a lengthy message to the JCS, CINCPAC warned that the US could not accept a RLG defeat in the battle for the Plaine Des Jarres; that Kong Le would commit his "maximum resources" to this decisive battle; and that extraordinary measures might be necessary to save Phoumi. CINCPAC reasoned that any peaceful solution which might be reached would be affected by the respective military positions of the RLG and PL.

On the next day CINCPAC informed the JCS that he "had been disturbed by [the] pessimistic tone" of Ambassador Brown's analysis of the Laotian crisis (see item 18 January 61). He again pleaded that the current restrictions on his support for the FAL be lifted.

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 7186, 29 Jan 61, 7496, 30 Jan 61, JCS Secretariat.

29 Jan Messages from Vientiane reported that the Laotian Government had informed the French Embassy in Vientiane that FAL units would take over "required" portions of Seno air base, and that Seno would henceforth be considered a Laotian base (see item 19 January 61).

On the following morning, the US Embassy reported that the French Ambassador had prevailed upon Phoumi to

modify his position. It reportedly was agreed that the Laotians would not move on to the base until 10 February, and that negotiations would be undertaken to reach a Franco-Laotian agreement on the status of Seno.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1447, 29 Jan 61;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1448, 31 Jan 61.

29 Jan CHPEO informed CINCPAC that Phoumi refused to use Laotian T-6's in strikes against the Soviet airlift over the Plaine des Jarres because of the enemy anti-aircraft defenses in the area. CHPEO also reported that Phoumi although he recognized the value of air strikes against enemy positions in the PDJ area, felt that such strikes required a plane with the capabilities of a B-26. CHPEO, however, doubted the ability of Laotian pilots to handle this type aircraft.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 79728, 29 Jan 61.

30 Jan The US Embassy in London reported to the Secretary of State that the UK had expressed disappointment that the US had not stressed the importance of delaying SEATO action until the Soviet had replied to the proposed reactivation of the ICC (see item 21 January 61). The UK warned that any SEATO action was likely to jeopardize the ICC proposal. (As of 31 January 61 the SEATO Council of Representatives had made no formal reply to the RLC appeal, nor had it reached any decision on the Australian proposal [see item 25 January 61].)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3065, 30 Jan 61.

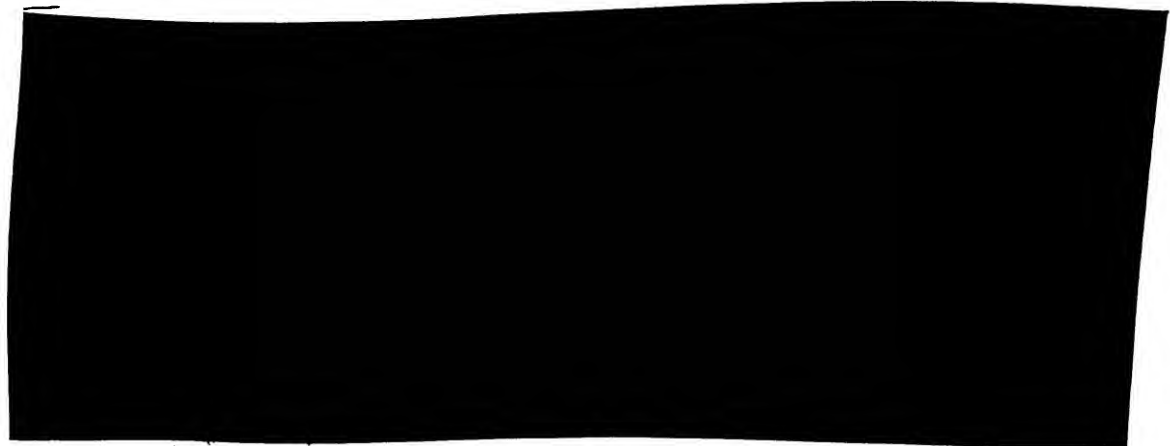
31 Jan CHPEO recommended that the proposed US logistic support group in Thailand (course e. of the proposed military courses of action approved by the President on 23 January--see item) store and service ammunition, communications equipment, and weapons. CHPEO noted that MAP procedures allowed war reserve stockage only for ammunition but believed it "highly desirable" that stocks of weapons and communications equipment also be stored in Thailand.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 80312, 31 Jan 61.

31 Jan CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that the effective use of the T-6's was seriously hampered by Phoumi's decision that the FAL pilots were the final authority on the conduct of any mission. CHPEO reported that FAL pilots had often refused to fly missions against "legitimate" targets on the basis of the alleged inadequacy of T-6 armaments and performance. CHPEO considered that the T-6 could, with proper targeting and pilot effectiveness, contribute to the FAL offensive as both a psychological and an operational weapon. CHPEO reported that there were many fixed targets suitable to T-6 attack and recommended that CINCPAC continue to seek authorization for the use of bombs. CHPEO considered, however, that air strikes by "other than T-6's" would be necessary to dislodge the Pathet Lao from their entrenched positions in the Plaine des Jarres area.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 80219, 31 Jan 61.

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31 Jan



(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos and CHJUSMAG Thailand, 310234Z Jan 61.



GLOSSARY

Abbreviations

AFL - Lao Air Force
ANL - Lao Army
CAS - Controlled American Source
DRV - Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FAL - Laotian Armed Forces
FMM - French Military Mission
ICC - International Control Commission
MAP - Military Assistance Program
NLHX - Neo Lao Hak Xat - the political party of the PL movement
PARU - Parachute Aerial Resupply Unit
PEO - Programs Evaluation Office
PL - Pathet Lao - a Communist-supported revolutionary movement
in Laos
RLG - Royal Laotian Government
RLP - Rally of the Lao People
RTG - Royal Thailand Government
SEATO - Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

Important Personages

Boun Oum Na Champassac, Prince - Premier and Foreign Minister of Laos since 13 Dec 60

Brown, Winthrop G. - US Ambassador to Laos

Bunker, Ellsworth - US Ambassador to India

Diem, Ngo Dinh - President of South Vietnam

Durbrow, Elbridge - US Ambassador to Vietnam

Heintges, John A., Brigadier General, USA (Ret.) - Chief of PEO

Houghton, Amory - US Ambassador to France

Irwin, John N. - Asst. Secretary of Defense, (ISA)

Johnson, W. Alexis - US Ambassador to Thailand
US Representative to SEATO

Knight, Robert H. - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)

Kong Le, Captain - Commander of the 2d Laotian Paratroop Battalion

Kouprasith Abhay, Colonel - Fifth Region Commander in Laos

Merchant, Livingston T. - Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Ouane Rathikone, General - Former Commander in Chief of the Royal Laotian Army

Parsons, J. Graham - Asst. Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs

Phoui Sananikone - Ex-Premier of Royal Laotian Government

Phoumi Nosavan, General - Leader of rightist forces in Laos;
Deputy Premier in Boun Oum Government

Quinim Pholsena - Leftist leader in ex-Premier Souvanna's Cabinet

Sarit Thanarat, Field Marshal - Prime Minister (Premier) of Thailand

Savang Vathana, King - King of Laos

Sihanouk, Norodom, Prince - Chief of State of Cambodia

Sopsaisana, Prince - Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Laos)

Souphanouvong, Prince - President of the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX)

Souvanna Phouma, Prince - Neutralist ex-Premier of Laotian Government

Thompson, Llewellyn E. - US Ambassador to USSR

Tiao Somsaniith - President of National Assembly and ex-Premier of the Royal Laotian Government

~~SECRET~~
Trimble, William C. - US Ambassador to Cambodia

Whitney, John H. - US Ambassador to Great Britain

Zellweger, Edouard - Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane